AUGUST 2018
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WITH THE TALENTED LAKEITH STANFIELD
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+
HEF IS RIBBED FOR HIS PLEASURE
THE INTERVIEW
WE GO ALL IN WITH COMEDIAN KATHY GRIFFIN
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Danielle Levitt
In addition to a passel of editorial credits, this photographer's portfolio is packed with standout campaigns for the likes of Girls and Planned Parenthood. In 20Q, the shutterbug — and Emmy-winning director — zooms in on Get Out scene-stealer Lakeith Stanfield following the 26-year-old's star turn in Sorry to Bother You.

Chris Shonting
Shonting's thoughtful yet in-your-face style is the 2018 photographic synthesis of Kids and "Kids in America." For Laughter in the Dark, part of Playboy's Summer Comedy Spotlight, the New York–based shooter spent time with the lovable leftist podcast pundits of Chapo Trap House.

Rebecca Smeyne
Smeyne has turned her lens on Kendall Jenner and Priyanka Chopra for The New York Times, but her penchant for portraying strong women isn't confined to the red carpet. For She Shoots, Smeyne headed to Vermont to meet the gunslingers featured in Julia Cooke's investigation of America's growing population of women-run gun clubs.

Ling Ma
In Shark Fin Dinner Party, Ma, who teaches fiction writing at the University of Chicago, navigates love and adulting via protagonist Candace Chen's epic apartment fete in Brooklyn. The exclusive excerpt is from Ma's debut novel, Severance, out August 14 from Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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ON THE COVER *Karlee Lauryn, photography by Arthur St. John*

No 8 August 2018

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THE PLEASURE IS OURS

You knocked it out of the park with your May June issue How fun and incredibly sexy to see the Femlin come to life through 2018 Playmate of the Year Nina Daniele. The way she kicks the l in playboy askew is especially clever, given the shifts inside the cover

As a woman who has been reading playboy for years, I've always felt as though I was sneaking in the back door of a gentlemen's club. I shrugged off the cigar smoke and sexist jokes because I drew so much inspiration from the Playmates it was their club, after all. In this issue, with all the great features and the new tagline "Entertainment for All," it feels like the front door is wide open and the cigar smoke has cleared Thanks, playboy, for inviting me in

C C Havens

ALL HAIL NINA

I bought my very first playboy because the amazing and beautiful Nina Daniele deserves all the love and support in the world It's great supporting strong, empowering women who are in full control of their bodies She makes this world a brighter, more beautiful place not only through her fashion and memes but because of her incredible spirit.

Patrick Lacsina

FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT

Call me naive, but I believe our vote still counts. The fact that a foreign power interfered with the 2016 election shows we need more election integrity The risk-limiting audit solution Steve Friess presents in We Demand a Recount (May/June) is one method of ensuring our elections are decided by voters and not by outside influences Since the founding of America, people have protested, fought and died for the right to vote. We should put aside political leanings and ensure that one of our most basic rights is protected.

Andrew Bejarano

A FAMILY AFFAIR

The girl next door featured in the April 1967 issue of playboy was Gwen Wong — my amazing mom (Heritage, March/April). I'm pretty sure she was named Miss April because of me. Although I was only five years old at the time, I'll never forget the moments I spent with Mom in the Bunny room Watching her and the other Bunnies adjusting their ears and tails was mesmerizing. Many older women still desire to be captivating, just like their beautiful moms. At the age of 56, I'm finally comfortable in my own skin for the first time and ready to shake my own bunny tail

April Jayne

HOT ISSUE

A bit of Biology 101 for your Playboy Advisor writer, who informed a reader that keeping one's testes cool and free-swinging will increase the volume of semen, or "cum," as she calls it (May/June) Testes produce spermatozoa and testosterone, and they aren't hollow Semen, or ejaculate — the juice that carries spermatozoa up and out of the urethra — is produced by the prostate gland, which is inside the body cavity and is at body temperature, which the Advisor claims is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Not necessarily Normal temps can vary from approximately 96 to 99 degrees and fluctuate during the course of a day. And to digress the Advisor's body temperature is lowest during menstruation and highest during ovulation,.

Earl Flaherty

FAITH RENEWED

When I saw the news that Playboy was mulling a shutdown of the print edition, with much sadness I quickly renewed my subscription in an attempt to support the publication and hopefully change your minds. I love the Heritage section that honors the great history of the magazine and showcases some of the incredibly beautiful, sexy women who so memorably built the foundation of playboy. Hopefully it shows today's women that they don't need to resort to synthetic methods in order to be lovely. I have to convey that I'm impressed with your recent design and content. I would be greatly saddened to see the magazine, now at the pinnacle of its evolution, end its glorious

history as an American icon and standard of excellence in entertainment and journalism.

Phil Bevans

Fear not, Phil. The magazine isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

NEW DETECTIVE IN TOWN

Killing Town, the novel excerpted in the March/April issue, has a history readers may like to know about. Back in 1946, newly married Frank Morrison Spillane (later known as Mickey Spillane) needed extra cash, so he decided to write a novel featuring a detective named Mike Hammer. The manuscript bore no title, and by what may be called a quirk of the cosmos, Spillane abandoned it after typing 30 single-spaced pages. He then began another Mike Hammer story, titled I, the Jury. He finished this second manuscript in 19 days. The book was published in 1947 and went on to sell 6.5 million copies by December 1948.

Spillane's typewriter went silent in 2006. Since then, his close friend Max Allan Collins, a writer and also the literary executor of Spillane's estate, has been busy editing and completing the many unfinished manuscripts of America's most famous crime novelist. Killing Town is the 11th of the Spillane manuscripts completed by Collins.

Ken Crockett

ALL BETS ON APRIL

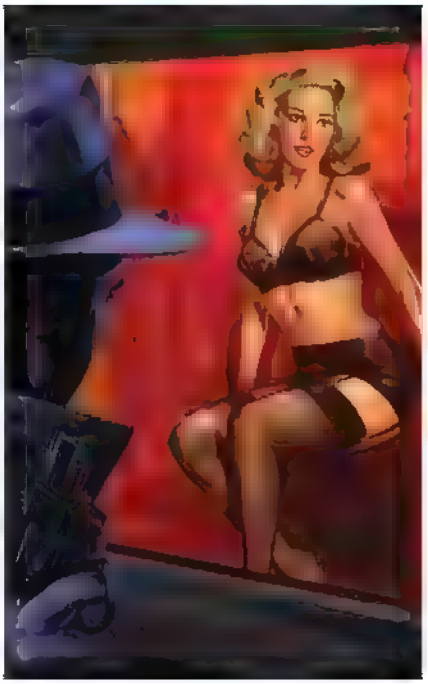
As I await the crowning of your 2018 Playmate of the Year, I can't help anticipating that another April Playmate will receive the 2019 PMOY title after seeing Nereyda Bird's breathtaking pictorial (Bird of Paradise) in your March/April issue. Wow! What a beautiful, dynamic young woman. She certainly has my vote.

Josh Fehrens

Thanks for the feedback, Josh. We wouldn't be surprised if you were on the money come 2019.

CURVE APPEAL

I became a subscriber again after watching the excellent docuseries on Hugh Hefner (Amazon's American Playboy). I really like the look and design of the magazine, but I have one complaint. Why are all the women so skinny? They are absolutely beautiful, but I see no curves anywhere. When it comes to pictorials, I prefer the women in your Heritage section.



Dames and dirty cops: Mike Hammer is back.

Alan Dunagan

We're glad to have you back, Alan. We hope that the voluptuous beauties in this issue's Mane Stay and Sun Song pictorials will reassure you of our commitment to curves.

MERCI BEAUCOUP

California girl and June Playmate Cassandra Dawn exudes the hot "girl next door" vibe (California Dreaming, May/June). I would love to see more of her in future issues. And if all the women in Paris look like Elisa Meliani (Mediterranean Morning), then playboy should feature French models more frequently. The lovely Elisa has a charming smile and amazing curves. She is a definite new favorite.

Paul Marini

BALANCING ACT

changes lately -or "evolved," as you like to put it. I have been reading it since it came out, but the Playboy Interview with Cecile Richards, then president of Planned Parenthood, made me sick (May/June). Richards claims that "a lot of [men] in office... don't believe that women should be able to have sex freely." Are you kidding? Richards also thinks men don't want women to have power. Look at President Trump's administration. He has many women at cabinet rank and also many advisors who are women. This is not new. The past several presidential administrations have had women in powerful positions, and many women serve as chief executives. playboy, while making great strides in photography, has gotten too liberal. Name one conservative moral value that you espouse. Here's an idea for your magazine: Run an interview with Mike Pence. I would love to hear what he has to say on some of these issues. Try to put some balance in your material, but keep up the great pictorials.

Name withheld

We think you'll be pleased with our profile of left-baiting renegade Jordan Peterson on page 136. Send us your thoughts, we're always up for a lively debate.

DARIÉN UPDATE

A lot of our readers want to know what became of the Where the Road Ends motorcycle crew featured in our May/June story Surviving the Darién Gap. Author Scott Yorko fills us in. "Three of the four members of the crew continued their journey south with little issue other than a few flat tires and a painful case of something called 'monkey butt' from so much time in the saddle. On March 27 they logged 18,571 miles and rolled into a parking lot in Ushuaia, Argentina. They were exhausted but couldn't help staring across the Strait of Magellan. 'Nobody's ever crossed Antarctica on a motorcycle before,' someone piped up. What started as a joke quickly became a serious conversation."

EATING MEATY

We've put together some interesting y tasty rec pes to prepare for yourself or when you're expecting guests. So, hit the local grocery store, buy supp ies, put on that cooking apron and get ready to surpr se your palate

Ingredients

1kg chicken mince
1 large red salad onion
1 medium red pepper or 2 medium pimento peppers and pips
1 tsp fresh garlic
2 tsp onion powder
1 tbsp soya sauce
1 tbsp honey
1 tsp salt
2g ground black pepper
1 handful of freshly chopped basil
1 large egg

Garnish

1 tsp sesame seeds
1/2 tsp honey
1/2 tsp olive oil

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 200°C
- Make use of a large mixing bowl
- Chop the red salad onion into small pieces
- Chop the red pepper or pimento peppers into small pieces and keep the pips
- Add the onion, pepper and pips to the chicken mince
- Add the freshly minced garlic, onion powder, soya sauce, honey, salt, ground black pepper and freshly chopped parsley and mix well.
- Whisk the egg separately and add to the mince. Mix well
- Prepare a baking dish with non-stick spray.
- Roll the chicken mince into medium size mince balls and place in baking dish
- Place in oven for 15min, remove and drizzle with honey, olive oil and place back in oven for 2-3min
- Enjoy with side of your choice

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
1 red salad onion
500g mince
500g rosa tomatoes cut in halves
1 heaped tsp fresh garlic
3 tsp salt
2 heaped tbsp paprika
10g of freshly chopped parsley
2 eggs

For the crust

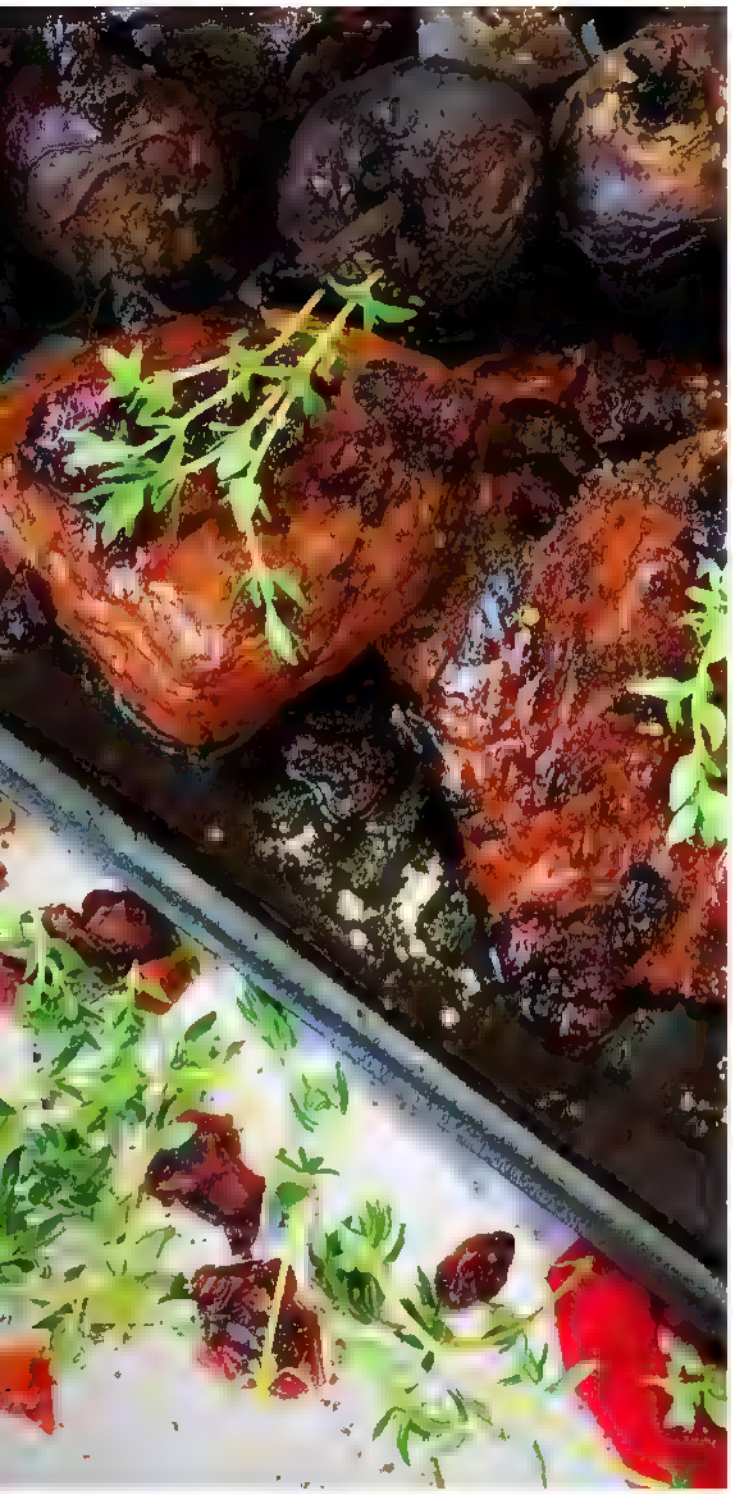
2 cans of butterbeans rinsed
1 heaped tbsp onion flakes
1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp salt
50g almond flour
1 tbsp honey
1 4 tsp ground black pepper

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 200°C
- Fry the onion in a bit of olive oil and add the rosa tomatoes and cook till soft
- In a separate pan fry the mince till brown.
- Add the mince to the tomato and onion mix
- Add the garlic, salt, paprika and parsley
- Let simmer till most moisture has evaporated
- Remove from heat and allow to cool
- Whisk the eggs, add to the mince and mix well
- Prepare the pie dish with non-stick spray
- Pour the mince mixture into the dish, distribute evenly and press down firmly.

Topping

- Mix the butterbeans, onion flakes, onion powder, salt, almond flour and honey
- Whisk the eggs separately and add to the mixture
- Pour over the mince and distribute evenly.
- Finish off with ground black pepper
- Bake for 25min



[redacted]

Ingredients

Whole baby beetroot
1 tbsp olive oil
2g salt
1 pinch ground black pepper
500g ostrich fillet

Marinade

3 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1 heaped tsp paprika
1 tbsp honey
1 handful cranberries
1 tsp caramel essence

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 200°C
- Prepare baking tray with non-stick spray
- Wash baby beetroot and allow to dry
- Place the beetroot on baking tray, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and ground black pepper.
- Place in the oven for 40-45min till baby beets are soft on the inside and crispy on the outside, garnish with freshly chopped thyme

For the meat

- Mix all the marinade ingredients together, till the honey is dissolved
- Baste the meat on both sides in the marinade and place in hot pan with a drizzle of olive oil
- Fry for 4min on each side for medium rare.
- Once all the meat is cooked, pour the left-over marinade in the pan and allow to thicken as the moisture evaporates, drizzle over the meat and garnish with freshly chopped thyme

LET'S PLAY

CAROLINE VREELAND

Musician, model and bon vivant Caroline Vreeland has heard it a thousand times. "There are people who are like, 'Oh, she's hot and has big tits,' and then, 'She sings? Who knew?' " With her first EP slated to drop later this year, that decidedly myopic perception is about to shift. The Marin County native started singing at the age of eight; when she moved to Los Angeles a decade later, she could easily have leveraged her family name — she's the great-granddaughter of legendary Vogue editor in chief Diana Vreeland. "I was always a little bit bratty about the Diana thing," she says. "Of course I honoured it, but I thought it was important for me to make my own name for myself." Soon her charisma, her Jessica Rabbit body and her well-documented love of food and wine helped her do just that, transforming her into a social-media force. Once the fashion world caught on, music fell by the wayside, but with the release of her bluesy new single "Unbreakable Love" she's reintroducing herself as an artist who can evoke the Weeknd and Patsy Cline in a single verse. "I think that was just my journey," she says of her years away from music. "But now it's time." Not a moment too soon. *Rebecca Haithcoat*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
GRAHAM DUNN

Anne

Photographs by CHRIS CHILDRESS (IKONIC IMAGERY)
Text by NELLY MADUNA

Sherlock

Tell us something surprising about you?
I actually earned my junior black belt in karate when I was 15!

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Extremely! It's a dream come true for me!

What inspires you?
Art and music inspire me

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
I was a beauty pageant competitor and transitioned from that into modelling and fell in love with it!

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?
Ashley Graham and Iskra Lawrence

What are some of your hobbies?
Singing, travelling, volunteering, Kickboxing, and reading

Name three things on your bucket list?
To travel the world, work at a rehab clinic, and to start my own non-profit organisation.

Turn-ons
Confidence, someone who is family oriented and great with kids, hardworking, polite, gentle, and can make me laugh

Turn-offs
Arrogance, rudeness, close-mindedness.

Describe to us your perfect date
Any place where I can have a great conversation with my date and get to really connect with them!

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
I'm dying to visit Sydney, Australia! It looks absolutely beautiful and the people seem so kind!

What is your mantra?
Be kind to everyone, for each person is fighting their own battle.

PLAYBOY'S
SUMMER
Comedy
SPOTLIGHT
Join us and more than a dozen of our favourite comics as we look at
politics and platforms, sex and science through the lens of laughter

Welcome to My Mind

by Hannibal Buress

The actor and comedian offers a tantalising glimpse of his creative process, with the help of a bad joint and a wayward tentacle

I have this bit

I don't even know if it's actually.... No, it's definitely not comedy

It's just a weird piece where I talk about somebody I knew in Nashville who was coming to my show. I jokingly said, "Hey, bring some weed! I'll give you some tickets." I really didn't care if she brought weed or not, but she brought a joint, and I'm like, "Thank you." I get back to the Airbnb and I'm looking at the joint, and it looks super brown. And then I break down the joint and it's mostly tobacco. She gave me a spliff.

Now, that's weird, rude, inconsiderate, dishonest. I don't smoke cigarettes. You can't give somebody a surprise cigarette, you know what I mean? And it wasn't even a good ratio of tobacco to weed. I felt a little offended and weirded out by it, so I hit her up. "Are you serious? You been hanging out with people from England? What is this shit?"

I tried to figure out a way to talk about that onstage. We have a projector, so I put up a picture of the contents of that garbage joint. "Look at this shit!" It was not really that moving, just kind of like, "Okay." I thought to myself, This bit is not that good. It's not really a comedy bit, it's just me complaining.

I decided to channel the audience's disinterest. "You guys don't like this bit because it's disgusting. That's why you're quiet about it." And then I was sitting at an Airbnb in between shows and I said, "What if I was like, 'Would you rather see this or, . . pregnant porn?' " And then I was like, "Okay, what if we actually put on pregnant porn and kept switching between the pregnant porn and the picture of the spliff?" And then somehow pregnant porn turned into tentacle porn.

And so onstage we cue up the tentacle porn. I say, "Hey, look at this terrible spliff. Oh, you guys are silent because you're horrified. What's worse, this or tentacle porn?" And we play a quick clip of tentacle porn, and then I do it how eye doctors do it: "Number one," and it's the spliff; "Number two," tentacle porn. I do that for a couple of minutes.

It's not really stand-up, but it's fun to do.

But then I got a message from this girl: "What was that that you showed? I've never seen ." And then she's like, "How do I find that?" I said, "Just go to TubeGalore. They have a tentacle-porn section." Later she wrote me, "That was the weirdest, hottest thing I've ever seen!" So I took a risk and changed one life. With tentacle porn.

If you asked me at 19, when I started, if I'd be 35 and introducing strangers that paid to see me do tentacle porn, I'd probably say, "That's a weird thing to say about me 16 years from now." I'd probably kick you out of my house or wherever we were. I would say, "First of all, what is tentacle porn? And leave my home."

OPPOSITE PAGE: MR. PLAYBOY BY **CHLOÉ FLEURY**. THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JESSE LIROLA**

Laughter in the Dark

Having survived the 2016 election, the far-left podcast Chapo Trap House doubles down on its radical satire. If you're not laughing, you're not paying attention.

BY **BRIAN HEATHER**

The Brooklyn apartment that serves as home base for the political-satire podcast Chapo Trap House feels more like a dorm room than a recording studio. Graphic novels line the walls, attended by a drinking bird, and the coffee table is covered in mike cords, cups and rolling papers.

Around that table sit hosts Felix Biederman, Will Menaker, Matt Christman, Amber A'Lee Frost and Virgil Texas. Producer Chris Wade sprawls on a beanbag, searching for enough microphones to cover the co-hosts and a guest who has yet to arrive. The episode they're about to tape will be beamed to 25,000 Grey Wolves, the show's loyal listeners, named ironically and somewhat arcanely for a Turkish ultranationalist movement.

Recording hasn't started, but the crew is already bantering about John McAfee, Prince and Eva Braun. It's Earth Day and one of the first truly nice days of the year. There's a fleeting mention of how beautiful it is outside. Everyone agrees, and then it's back to examining Kanye's most recent run of crazy tweets. When recording begins, there's very little change in the tenor of the room.

In its purest form, podcasting is a casual conversation recorded for posterity, and few shows capture that magic in a bottle as well as Chapo Trap House. As Menaker puts it, "The social atomization that has been created by the current conditions means that we have now created a new type of artist — basically 'professional friend.' " To the podcast's following, which has only grown since the election, this friend moonlights as both therapist and, amid the laughs, sibling who calls you on your shit.

• • •

The show that began in March 2016 as an exchange between three Twitter friends — and that libertarian magazine Reason once called "a group therapy session for Bernie bros" — was founded for those among the left who feel their ideals aren't addressed by either the political system or the mainstream media. It came together during a brief moment when it seemed Sanders might succeed in disrupting the DNC.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRIS SHONTING**

"There was basically no media saying to people who were backing Sanders in that primary, 'You're not crazy; this is all crazy,' " Christman says. "Every other piece of established media, even the most liberal stuff you could get in a mainstream context, was telling you that Bernie was crazy, his followers were a bunch of dumb-ass college students and harassing monsters, and Hillary was the progressive choice."

Of course, things didn't work out too well for either Democrat. As for Chapo, the night Trump won, the show's hosts assumed it was done for. "We thought we'd be lost in the liberal blob that was going to be resistance to Trump," says Brendan James, the show's former producer. "We thought subscribers would just go stagnant and we'd get bored. Instead, subscriptions shot up after Trump won. And then after the inauguration they shot up again."

Two years after its first episode, Chapo stands as one of the premier progressive podcasts, offering a jarringly funny alternative to mainstream political comedy. It regularly delves into such life-and-death topics as North Korea and America's broken health care system, but rarely does it take itself too seriously — and when it does, there's invariably a Simpsons reference or a Muppet-esque impression of a right-wing commentator just around the bend. In an age of social-media and cable-news overload, the show navigates political minutiae without feeling like social-studies homework. It's a coping mechanism for a world gone mad.

Today, loyal Grey Wolves fund the show to the tune of around $99,000 a month on Patreon. In August, team Chapo will spawn its first book, The Chapo Guide to Revolution. A satirical take on A People's History of the United States, the book skewers everything from fascist regimes to Aaron Sorkin. "It's Howard Zinn meets Howard Stern," Texas deadpans, sending the room into hysterics. ("Oh my God," Christman says, "that gave me leukaemia.")

As this episode, "Comey the Clown," kicks off, Texas launches into an over-the-top Bernie Sanders impression: "I want to thank the men for having me here today, thank the women for their reverent silence and thank the people of colour for not being visible. Except for you, of course, [Cornel] West." It's irony folded into irony, and Texas's co-hosts can't contain their laughter.

• • •

"We're actually pretty rarely educational, and usually only by accident," says Frost. "Media people think they're changing the world by writing their fucking Medium post about how Trump is bad. That takes real political mobilization, and we want to be very clear that's not what we're doing."

The show's hosts are modest to a fault in describing their mission, but at its best, Chapo is a biweekly reminder that there's a world of progressive politics to the left of the Democratic Party — a world where labor unions are king and casting a vote means more than simply choosing between the lesser of two evils. At a time when late-night comedy is mostly content to focus on jabs at the commander-in-chief's skin tone, Chapo's long-form, freewheeling conversations attempt to make some sense of the utter insanity of contemporary politics. Over time it might even provide the pop culture analogue to the last Democratic presidential primary, which saw a deep-left candidate draw his decidedly more entrenched rival a few steps away from the centre. So how does Chapo stack up against that other, vastly more established font of political satire?

"IT'S HOWARD ZINN MEETS HOWARD STERN."

"After decades of The Daily Show, which at one point was really punchy and good but is now garbage, obviously you're leaving so much out on the table that you're only going to be left with hack jokes," says Menaker. "People may not think we do it the best, but we're trying to tap into a whole other sort of undervalued side of ways to make jokes."

"If you can't go further left than that," Christman adds, "it's you and 500 other shows trying to make the same four jokes, because that's how much joke territory you've allowed yourself."

Chapo has become a rallying point for loyal listeners who have felt disenfranchised and downright terrified by the two-party system and the rise of Trumpism. But among the show's rapid-fire references and heaps of sarcasm, there's a genuine sense that all is not lost. Dare we call it hope?

"Obviously it's hard to be optimistic about the future of the United States in a kind of broad, giant sense," says Menaker. "But I'm constantly made to feel hopeful by people who say, 'I thought I was crazy until I listened to you.' "

THE QUOTABLE CHAPO

POD PERSON

Let the wildly prolific ***Paul F. Tompkins*** *be your guide to the comedy-podcast firmament*

BY **TIM DONNELLY**

From *Mr. Show to BoJack Horseman*, Paul F. Tompkins has staked his claim on some of modern comedy's most cult-adored outposts — but the core of his devoted following undoubtedly comes from his work in podcasts. Delve into his appearances as guest, host or character, and it's a safe bet you'll become that one headphoned maniacally laughing commuter on the bus.

A Reddit database tracks more than 1,100 Tompkins podcast appearances, and fans have flooded the internet with artwork depicting his characters. His secret? He's just like you. "If you're outside Los Angeles, if you're getting into comedy, you can listen to these things and think, Okay, there are people out there who share a sensibility with me. That means there's a place for me in this arena, there's a place for me in this world."

HOST

SPONTANEANATION

Tompkins fully embraced longform improv when he launched this show in 2015. The centrepiece is a three-button board that improvisers can smash to jump forward, backward or sideways in time. "That can sometimes be a challenge. The biggest problem is people hitting the wrong buttons."

THREEDOM

If *Comedy Bang! Bang!* (see next column) is a margarita, Threedom is a triple shot of Patrón with no chaser. The podcast launched in March with CBB all-stars Tompkins, Lauren Lapkus and Scott Aukerman — who basically wanted to share their hilarious friendship with everyone. "Listening to it is almost like I'm not listening to us. Hearing our dynamic recorded is like listening to three people I don't know, but I enjoy their enjoyment of each other."

THE DEAD AUTHORS PODCAST

On this now dormant series, H.G. Wells (Tompkins) uses his time machine to bring dead authors into the present for interviews. It leads to sometimes educational hilarity, such as when Ben Schwartz, playing his childhood favourite, Roald Dahl, was asked about the writer's notorious anti-Semitism. "Ben was crushed. It was crazy to see all the emotions he was having while trying to keep up his character."

IMPROV

COMEDY BANG! BANG!

Scott Aukerman's weekly show is the north star of the Tompkinsverse. First contributing in 2009, Tompkins quickly built the improv muscles that would turn him into the most eligible guest in all of podcastdom. While his voices vary wildly, his off-mike laughter is a constant. "I stopped trying to stifle it. I'm not going to act like I'm above it—or that it didn't earn my laughter."

WITH SPECIAL GUEST LAUREN LAPKUS

Each episode's "guest" serves as "host" and creates a new concept for the show. Tompkins has dropped in a few times, playing characters from his extended universe, including Santa Claus to Lapkus's naughty elf, Ho Ho. "You try to paint the other person in a corner more because you are friends and because you know it will be fun watching them wriggle out of it."

POP CULTURE

WHO CHARTED?

For hosts Kulap Vilaysack and Howard Kremer, Who Charted? is a chance to riff on the top entertainment of the week. For Tompkins, a frequent guest, it's a chance to learn what the hell kids are listening to. "I don't even mind being the old man saying, 'This song is dumb.'"

HOW DID THIS GET MADE?

Hosted by Paul Scheer, June Diane Raphael and Jason Mantzoukas, the podcast dissects the film flops we love to hate. For one of Tompkins's episodes, he endured Lake Placid, the 1999 giant-crocodile horror-comedy. "There was so much about that movie that did not make sense and was not justified."

FANTASY

HELLO FROM THE MAGIC TAVERN

Tompkins's characters have a flair for the fantastical, so they're a natural fit on this dispatch from an alternate dimension, hosted by Arnie Niekamp. "I always admire world building. Also knowing what a burden that is to be the keeper of a lore — it's a pain in the ass."

SUPEREGO

Tompkins joins fellow cast members Jeremy Carter, Matt Gourley and Mark McConville for "case studies" such as "H R Giger," in which the Alien artist pickles black liquorice. The show has been up on blocks since 2016, but here's the good news, fans. "We got some live shows coming up. *Superego* is not done yet!"

bob

Shark Fin Dinner Party

The shark fin dinner party took place on a cold, rainy Saturday night in late August. It marked the end of that strange transitory summer and the beginning of something else.

The guests consisted of a mix of college friends and Jane's people, co-workers and neighbours. They crowded into our railroad apartment, guys in skinny ties and suits, girls with big Aqua Net hair and acrylic nails. They piled their coats on our beds, rolled a keg up the stairs, brought little hostess gifts. Giorgio Moroder played in the background. Someone came dressed as Ronald Reagan, pelting girls with jelly beans from his suit pocket.

We'd created a makeshift Trump-themed dining table in our living room by arranging collapsible card tables end to end. Over this Jane had laid a metallic gold tablecloth, weighted by a thrifted brass candelabra, and bouquets of fake plastic flowers she'd spraypainted gold. On the table were ironic predinner canapes: salmon mousse quenelles with dill cream, spinach dip in a bread bowl, Ritz crackers and a ball of pimento cheese in the shape of Trump's hair.

I navigated through the rooms in one of my mother's loose, billowy Contempo Casuals dresses, this one black with a white burnout Africana print.

In the midst of this fray was Steven Reitman, dressed as if for a Hamptons boating party, standing amongst the secondhand furniture of my bedroom. I had invited him almost as a joke, considering that we hadn't seen each other all summer, so I hadn't actually expected him to come.

Is this a dinner party or a costume party? he asked, pressing his whiskered cheek to mine in an air kiss. The scent of his expensive yuzu aftershave made me suddenly wistful for the few times we'd spent together. I swallowed.

You don't need an '80s costume, I said. You can say you're here for research, observing millennials in their natural habitat. I sat down on the edge of my bed, pushing aside the mountain of jackets.

So you invited me to be the party ethnographer? Should've brought my notebook. He sat down beside me, crossing his legs, exposing ankle sock. The bed sagged.

I shrugged and sipped from my rum and Coke. The dim light from the nightstand lamp dramatised our expressions.

How have you been? Sitting very close, he spoke in a low, conspiratorial tone, intimating an intimacy that we never really shared. I noticed that his sports jacket featured a Liberty floral pocket square that someone else, another girl, I assumed, must've helped him choose. No way would he have chosen it on his own.

How's the postcollege job market looking? he pressed.

I don't know. I've been focusing more on, I guess, personal projects.

Well, the reason I ask is— he reached into his back pocket— I didn't come empty-handed. He opened his wallet. For a moment I was afraid he was going to hand me cash, but it was something else, a business card. It read, michael reitman, ceo.

It's my brother's company, Steven explained. There's a position open. Give him a call.

You told your brother about me? I studied the card uncertainly, trying to make out the letters in the low light. What's Spectrum?

Spectra, he corrected. They're a publishing consulting firm that handles book production. It's not art or design, but it's something. They're looking to fill an assistant position. My brother will have more details, if you get in touch.

I studied the card again, avoiding Steven's gaze. I didn't need a job right away, but I needed something, a point of entry into another life that wasn't just about milling around, walking. I could feel my parents' disapproval hanging over me. I was embarrassed that Steven had sensed what I needed.

Thank you, I finally said. But you didn't have to.

It's nothing. I just mentioned you. Now he looked embarrassed.

I know we're not—

Dinner is ready! Jane clamoured through the rooms, gathering guests up.

You go ahead, I told Steven. I'll be right in.

He stood up. Okay. I'll see you in there?

I smiled reassuringly. When he left the room, I closed the door. Then, I crawled to the head of my bed, over the mountain of jackets, where I opened the window and climbed out onto the fire escape. The tinny, collapsible structure winced. The air outside was cool and humid. Tiny pinpricks of rain dotted my arms.

The fire escape looked out on the backs of other apartment buildings and a communal garden that all the ground-level tenants shared, its disorganized, uncultivated plots overrun with ghetto palms and riffraff vegetation; a dash of wildflowers here, a fledgeling fruit tree there.

I sat down. A full minute elapsed before I started crying. Or more like a shallow, panicky mouth breathing, dry and sobless. I tried to focus my breath, steady it, in and out, like breaststrokes in deep, choppy water.

Hey, you're blocking all the rain.

The voice came from below. I looked down. Through the grating, I saw a guy sitting on his window ledge, reading a book, smoking a cigarette. He was the summer subletter downstairs. I'd seen him at the mailboxes.

Sorry, I said automatically.

He looked up, smiled impishly. No sorry. Just giving you a hard time.

I'm getting some air, I explained unnecessarily.

Okay. He blew out a lungful of smoke. Fire escape is all yours. Do you mind if I just finish this first?

I considered the top of his head. Can I have one?

Sure. Then, after a pause, Should I come up?

I looked into my empty room. I could hear Jane still rallying everyone to the table. I'll just come down.

The fire escape rattled beneath my feet. He helped me down the last steps, where, at the landing, I extended my hand. He had a surprisingly firm grip, given his thin, boyish frame. There was a sadness to his face, dark circles under his blue eyes.

He asked, Do you want to wait here or come inside while I get you one?

I peeked inside his window. Is this your room?

Yes. He hesitated. Would you like to come in?

I climbed in and looked around. He lived in the room directly below mine. It was the same room— our apartments shared the same floor plan— except cleaner, better. My room was messy, cluttered with too many things. His room was clean and ascetic, bare walls dimly lit by a floor lamp. There was something serene about it, a temple emptied of all ceremonial accoutrements and cleared of incense smoke.

I live right above you, I informed him.

I know. I can hear you walking late at night. You pace. He caught himself. Sorry, I don't mean to sound creepy. You just have this skittish way of walking.

A skittish way of walking?

Like, restless. I hear your roommate too.

She gets up very early. I can hear her grinding coffee.

Does she not have a skittish way of walking?

He contemplated this. Um, no. Your roommate walks very purposefully, but you, you're more unsettled, unsure. Not an insult, just an observation. He had found his pack of American Spirits and handed one to me, not touching the filter. I liked that consideration.

I rolled it around between my fingers. My roommate gets up early, I allowed. It's a long commute. She has this fashion PR job in Jersey.

Here, sit down. I can't find my light. Let me get one from the kitchen.

I sat down on the edge of the bed. It was a mattress on the floor, carefully dressed with white sheets. There was no chair. Affixed on the walls were two plastic hooks, one for a towel and the other for a jacket next to the door frame. In lieu of a dresser, clothes were neatly stacked in three rows on the floor against the wall: jeans, underwear and white T-shirts. A small floor lamp was arranged next to a few library books. Rousseau. Foucault.

When he returned, he was holding the largest butane lighter I'd ever seen. May I? he asked.

I nodded, and he attempted to light my cigarette, ridiculously, the gas flame licking my cheek.

Should we go back outside? I don't want to smoke up your room.

No, stay. Smoke up my room. He sat down on the bed. We smoked. He seemed content to say nothing.

So, I said, searching. Tell me about what you do. I regretted it as soon as I asked. It was the question everyone asked everyone else in New York, so careerist, so boring.

What I do for money or what I actually do?

Both, I guess. I exhaled a plume of smoke.

I temp for money, usually copywriting jobs. I freelance a bit too, a few articles and interviews. But what I actually do is write fiction. And you, what about you?

I live off my parents, I said, surprised by the casualness with which I dispensed this information. I didn't elaborate that they were both deceased, and that the family coffers or whatever would last me just long enough — maybe, say, for the next 10, 15 years — for me to be comfortable with not working, long enough to be useless. The fruits of my immigrant father's lifelong efforts would be gobbled up and squandered by me, his lazy, disaffected daughter.

But I'm looking for a job, I added. I have an interview coming up at this place called Spectra.

What are you interviewing for?

Um, I have no idea.

He smiled, as if to himself. By this point, my cigarette had gone out. I hesitated. There's in the mirror. My private grievances were all over my face. I looked upset. My skin looked dry and tight; I'd probably forgotten to moisturize. I threw some water on my face.

When I opened the door, he was waiting in the hallway. Together, we entered my apartment the same way I had left it: up the fire escape, through my window and into my room. We walked into the living room, to a dinner that had just begun. Everyone looked up.

Who's this? Jane asked.

This is, um — I turned to him, realising we'd never introduced ourselves.

Jonathan, he said.

Jonathan, I repeated. He's our downstairs neighbour.

Can I get you something to drink, Jonathan? Jane said. If she was annoyed by our lateness, she didn't show it. We have kamikazes, rum and Cokes, anything.

Just seltzer water if you have any.

I'll get it, I said, walking to the kitchen while Jane pulled up an extra chair for him, clear across the other end of the table, while I was seated next to Steven.

Once we were all seated, we beheld the magnum opus at the centre of the table: The shark fin soup was arranged in a crystal punch bowl with a ladle, prom-style. Actually, two punch bowls. One for the original soup, and another for the mysterious vegan version that was a better man than he because he was a fair man. Or something like that.

And you're not a fair man? I asked Steven.

A family man, Steven corrected, slurring. My brother has always been a family man. Whereas I have only performed at it. And badly.

I realised he was addressing his divorce, the emotional repercussions he must have been struggling with. He'd never spoken of his family, and whatever information I'd gleaned was vague and clichéd: the distant wife, the troubled children.

You're fine, I said. You're okay. Nothing bad is happening right now.

He smiled, eyes bloodshot, and spooned his soup.

Suddenly, I felt a bit nauseated. It was so hot and smoky and perfumed inside.

In keeping with the vaguely Orientalist theme, Jane had bought a mah-jongg set that we were all supposed to play after dinner, but no one could figure out the game.

Candace, I thought you knew how to play this, someone yelled at me.

Why, because I'm Asian?

We gave up. We disassembled the card tables that made up our dining table and moved them out into the hallway. The living room was cleared.

Suddenly, the sound of the fire alarm cut

The alarm broke a spell;

a party that I'm supposed to be hosting.

What, now? He started.

I nodded. They've probably begun without me. You're invited, if you'd like.

I'll walk you up at least. He stood up and came over to me. I thought he was going to pull me up, but instead, he licked his thumb and touched my cheeks. I realised that he was clearing off dried streaks of mascara. I'd forgotten that only moments earlier, I'd been crying.

I'm going to pretend you're not cleaning me with your spit. I closed my eyes. Is it coming off?

No. You might have to use my bathroom.

Can I use your bathroom?

Sure. It's down the — actually, you know where it is.

I walked to where my bathroom would have been. The bathroom was also tidy, unlike our space, full of generic Duane Reade products lined up in his medicine cabinet, which I opened to look for prescription pill bottles. There weren't any. I couldn't see his private grievances.

I closed the cabinet and looked at myself

Jane had made.

Jane served all of us, ladling it out into bowls.

The shark fin had a strange, gelatinous texture. We chewed for a long time, then swished the soup down with red wine.

I should've bought white, Jane said. Better with seafood.

The tannins, someone agreed.

It's not bad, Jonathan said, and really seemed to mean it.

The rest of us forced the soup down our throats. Jane passed around a glass candy dish full of oyster crackers, which guests sprinkled in their bowls. It didn't make the soup any more palatable, any less sour or musty. I wondered if I'd made it wrong. The recipe had called for fresh shark fins. Instead, I had soaked the dried fins in filtered water for a few hours, to reconstitute them, before I'd made the soup. Aside from that, I had followed the recipe precisely.

I guzzled more wine than I could handle. Steven turned to me, his low voice forcing me to lean a little closer. He was saying something about his brother, how his brother

through the room. Everyone winced, covered their ears against the shrill electronic shriek.

What's burning? someone asked. I don't smell anything.

It's all the cigarette smoke, another person yelled.

Shit. Well, crack a window.

Should we stop smoking? a girl asked, her hand frozen, clutching her cigarette.

Jane waved her hand. Guys! Just dismantle the alarm! She climbed a kitchen chair to the smoke alarm on the ceiling, located the battery hatch and removed it.

The alarm had broken a spell. Afterward, everyone began to relax. We hooked up an iPod to the speakers and took turns deejaying. People jumped around in unison, a faux mosh pit. With happy, sunny pop music. In the kitchen, others played a drinking game called Bullshit Pyramid. Someone else had brought Twister, and the mat was laid out in the middle of my room. I wandered from room to room, circulating, playing at everything and losing, laughing hysterically as I scattered the cards, stumbled on the mat, jumped up and down, out of sync.

When other people are happy, I don't have to worry about them. There is room for my happiness. In this happiness, I lost track of Jane. I lost track of Steven. I lost track of Jonathan. I had seen him talking to a bunch of people as they sat around on the floor. Later still, through a curtain of smoke, I saw him in my room, looking through my bookcase. Those books aren't mine! I wanted to yell, even though that was not true. They were all mine. My Ántonia. Windowlight. Namedropper. Crime and Punishment, the one thing I saved from freshman English. The Metamorphosis. The Sweet Valley High series, paperbacks of teen horror and sci-fi that I had pilfered from visits back home. Christopher Pike. R.L. Stine. Coming-of-agers. I Capture the Castle. The Mysteries of Pittsburgh. A collection of defunct magazines from the '90s, Index being my favourite. How long had he been in there? And even later, I glimpsed him in Jane's room, watching some Italian movie on a laptop with a group of people, the loud exclamatory Italian phrases like typewriter keys clacking. Come stai? What was there to do but smile. I smiled and waved. Come join us, he yelled after me as I went down the hallway to do something else, I forget what. After that, I didn't see him and I figured he had probably gone back downstairs, through the fire escape of my room.

I don't know how many hours passed. I stopped and started. When I was tired, I sprawled out on the rug. When I was hungry, I nibbled on chips in the kitchen. I drank Sprite and wine coolers I found in the fridge. I was like a homeless person in my own house.

I was enjoying myself, but it was an insulated enjoyment. I was alone inside of it.

Around four, the party began to wind down. The sky had begun to lighten outside the window. Guests were gradually leaving, one by one or in groups, peeling themselves off the rug of our living room, where we hovered, drinking and passing a spliff. Jane was sleeping on the floor. The mountain of coats and jackets on my bed diminished until only a few remained. I identified Steven's sports coat, which he had taken off sometime during the night. It was missing its pocket square.

I picked it up and walked through the apartment. Steven? I called.

I found him in the bathroom, gripping the sink. He had sweat through his shirt. He was utterly, swervingly drunk, and with that drunkenness came complete, terrorising amorousness. But no, he was not just drunk. Something else. He had ingested something, it was so clear that he had ingested something. Maybe he had taken it willingly, or maybe someone had slipped it to him as a joke. My friends could be assholes.

Steven was touching my face, his eyes glassy. You look so sad, he said.

I'm not sad, I replied. Are you having a good time?

You're so beautiful, he said, not answering me. You're really beautiful, he repeated.

Thank you, I said maturely. Would you like me to call you a cab?

He shook his head vigorously. No. I want to stay.

Okay, you can stay. But why don't you lie down. I led him to the living room, toward the sofa. I was removing his shoes, attempting to unknot his grey leather shoelaces, so fine, like mouse whiskers.

No. I want to say something. I want to tell you something, he said urgently.

What's that?

He took my face in his hands and looked at me. I am alone, Steven said. I am without family. I am alone.

You're not alone, I said, though I did not know this to be a fact. And, because I was not close enough to him to tell him the truth, I added, You have people all around you. You're on TV.

I missed you, he persisted.

You have people, I repeated, not knowing what else to say.

No, you're not hearing me. You're not hearing me even though you understand. I missed you. All summer, I kept thinking about you.

Is that why you came? I asked, thinking of the times he had deflected my IMs, the times I had deflected his.

He looked at me. You invited me. Why did you invite me?

I didn't answer this. Instead, I said, A lot has changed for me this summer.

Like what? He was grabbing my wrists. How are you different? You look the same. Exactly the same.

He lurched toward me. I pulled back. Undeterred, he lunged again and attempted to kiss me, madly, desperately. When I pulled back again, he came crashing to the floor, dragging me down with him. Jane, lying on the rug a few feet away, didn't stir. With the both of us lying low, he started kissing me. It was like tumbling down a dizzying Escher staircase of beer-tasting embraces and caresses. I kissed him back. Through the yuzu aftershave, I could remember what it was like to kiss him, at the beginning of the summer, when he first took me over to his loft. I went around, looking at his things, his books, the framed art on the walls, his furniture that he'd paid someone to arrange. I opened up his bathroom cabinet and sniffed his collection of aftershaves. I opened up his closet and looked at his wood hangers and shoe trees. He got off on my curiosity. When I kissed him, it was like I was kissing all his things, all the signifiers and trappings of adulthood or success coming at me in a rush. Fucking was just seeing that to its end, a white yacht docking.

Now Steven was the one to disentangle himself. Hold on. Let's go to your room.

We walked to my room, to the very end of the railroad, where I saw Jonathan. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, fully dressed, reading. My heart dropped. As we came into the room, he looked up at Steven and me, putting two and two together. What was there for me to do but smile and try not to look too disgusting.

I was just leaving. Jonathan stood up and went to the window. I followed him, to close the window after him. When he pulled himself out on the fire escape, he turned around, his face half concealed by shadows.

Come downstairs and see me sometime, he said.

I will. Good night, I said, and as I turned away to go, his hand grabbed my arm.

Candace.

I smiled. Jonathan. What?

He leaned over and whispered in my ear. You're making a mistake. Then, before I could react, he licked my ear. With the tip of his tidy, scratchy tongue, he grazed the bottom of the lobe to the tip of the ear, in one stealth swoop.

I stepped back, grabbing my ear with both hands as if someone had cut it off. It was warm, and wet.

With that, he closed my window and descended the fire escape. I heard the fragile, thin metal clanging as he climbed down. I heard his window opening. Then I heard it close.

everyone began to relax.

From the novel Severance by Ling Ma, out August 14 from Farrar, Straus and Giroux

PLAYMATE

Valya
Romanova

Describe yourself in three words
Hot, smart and determined

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Being a Playmate has always been a dream of mine. I think the female body is absolute art, and Playboy has always been the magazine that could show that beautifully.

What was it like starting out as a model?
I started modelling in my early teen years. I went to a modelling school in Russia where I was taught how to move, walk, pose and dance. When I came to the US I realized that bikini and glamour modelling was a huge market. And my body was perfect for it. It took hundreds of photoshoots before my name could be recognized. And one day everything just started to happen for me. I was invited to feature in magazines, designers wanted me to promote their fashion, my social media started to grow, and finally I made it on the covers of major glamour magazines such as FHM and Maxim.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
Time. A couple of years ago I opened a medical spa where I do medical beauty treatments. Between running the business, doing the procedures and promoting the spa, I have very little free time. There are many modelling trips and opportunities that I had to put on hold due to my schedule. But it's all good. I am very happy with where I am at.

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling?
I love the ocean. Hanging out at the beach or on a boat is probably my favourite these days. I love exploring and traveling as well. Even a day trip to some new place is a joy for me.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?
I am more of a suburban kind of person. I love to live close to the city so I can have all the entertainment and fun. But I also I enjoy to be able to escape a city hassle when I need my quiet time.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
Right here in Florida, USA. I love the mild climate here. It's always summer. We have the ocean, the palms, the most beautiful beaches, and Disney land. It's a paradise!

Do you have a secret talent?
I can fly. No, I wish! I fly in my dreams though. But in the real life my secret talent I think is perseverance. I just never learned how to give up on things. I dream big and I make it happen.

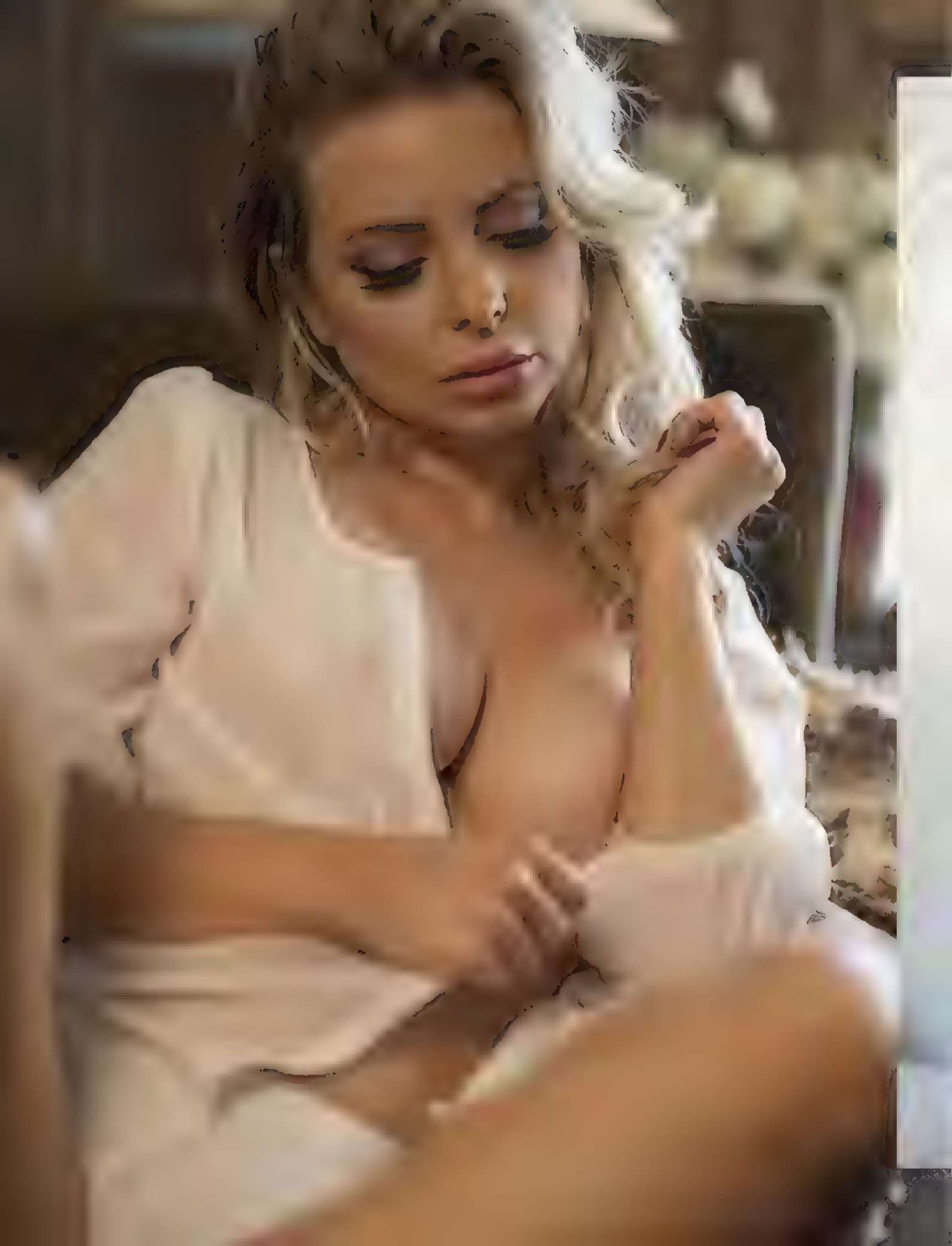
A guilty pleasure?
Just one? I have so many! Ice-cream, chocolate, champagne. I eat very healthy most of the time and I work out regularly, but on the weekend, I indulge in some sugar.

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?
"I'll be home for Christmas". Here in the USA they have it playing everywhere around Christmas time. My family lives very far from me and I don't always get to go home for the holidays. So, this song makes my heart ache every time.

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?
Love, and it truly means everything to me. You need to love what you do. Love people around you. Love your friends, your family, your significant other. And most of all, you need to love yourself with all your flaws and eccentricities.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Thank you so much for all your love and support. I hope that those of you who know me and are following my career enjoyed this feature. And I hope that those of you who are reading about me for the first time will become my new friends and supporters. Cheers!

PLAYMATE



PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: KATHY GRIFFIN

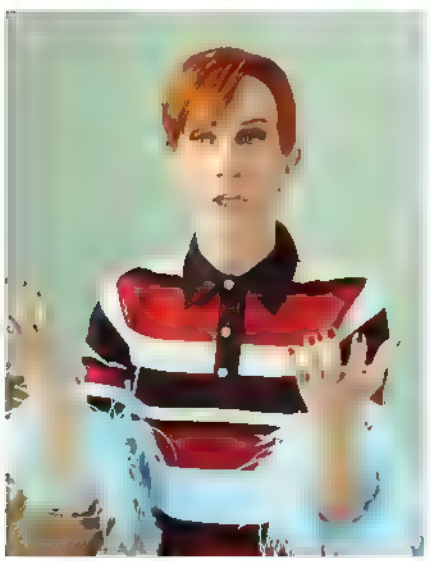
A candid conversation with the comedian on surviving one of the most precipitous falls from grace in pop culture history—and reemerging funnier and angrier than ever

No matter your opinion of Kathy Griffin, this much holds true: Today she is one of the few people in our collective consciousness who is as beloved as she is despised. Ironically, it's a quality the 57-year-old comedian shares with her greatest adversary: President Donald Trump. The important distinction, of course, is that Kathy Griffin is not the leader of the free world.

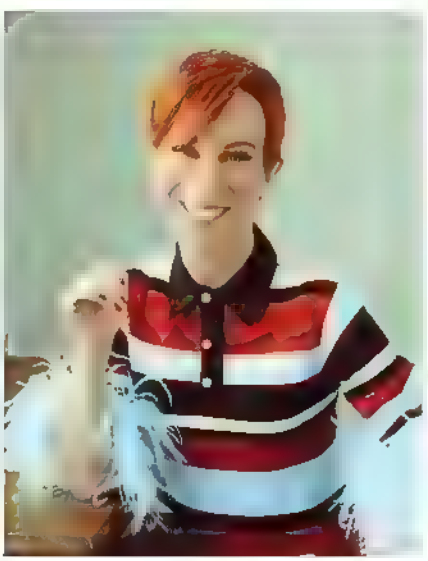
Griffin, two-time Emmy winner and New York Times best-selling author, one of only three women to take home a Grammy for best comedy album for solo work, Guinness World Record holder for "most standup specials by a comedian" and 2017's most unexpected enemy of the state—has few, if any, regrets. Absent from that list: her decision just over one year ago to share a photo of herself clutching a synthetic Trump head slathered in ketchup. Captured in Griffin's $10.5 million Bel Air mansion, the image triggered a rare instance of bipartisan condemnation across a nation severely bruised by 2016's tumultuous election. Somehow, in a time of widespread political discord, Americans agreed that Griffin's satire did not qualify as such and thus was unworthy of the First Amendment protections that have empowered and shielded American truth tellers from Lenny Bruce to Joan Rivers.

Citizens, pundits and celebrities on both sides, including her former friend Anderson Cooper and former first daughter Chelsea Clinton, joined the sitting president, then suffering one of the lowest approval ratings of his term thus far, in denouncing Griffin. The fallout included a canceled tour, an ouster from CNN, whose New Year's Eve special she had co-hosted for 10 years, a spot on an Interpol watch list and a two-month Department of Justice investigation into whether the U.S. government should charge the comedian with conspiracy to assassinate the president. All this, despite the fact that Griffin captioned a tweet of the imagery with an antiviolence disclaimer and issued two public apologies immediately afterward—one in a Twitter video, in which she admitted the image was "disturbing," and another during an ill-conceived press conference organized by former Harvey Weinstein lawyer Lisa Bloom.

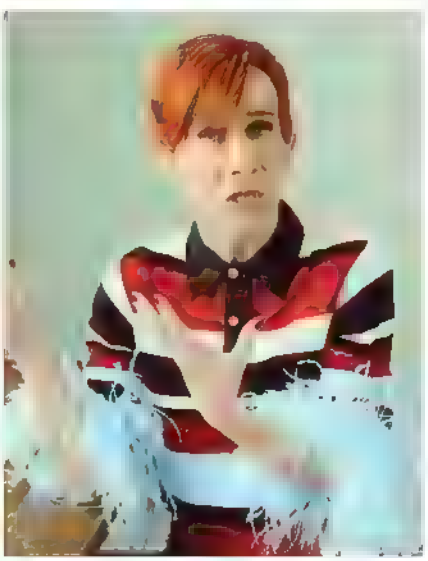
After learning she had been exonerated by the Secret Service on July 27, 2017, 58 days after she released the photo, Griffin has had no choice but to adapt to a surreal and perilous new life. At the same time the Secret Service was investigating her, the Federal



"When people come up to me and say, 'I'm so glad that whole Trump thing is over,' I have to correct them and say, 'I'm sorry. I don't mean to be rude, but it's not.'"



"Even my mom doesn't take Fox News seriously anymore. It did take me about two hours to convince her I'm not an ISIS, because she doesn't like to wear her hearing aids."



"One thing that bothers me is how the Milo Yiannopouloses of the world have coopted the term free speech. The march in Charlottesville? Not the free speech we're talking about."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUSTIN HARGRAVE**

Bureau of Investigation stepped in as well, this time to ensure Griffin's safety from "credible threats." Death threats against Griffin, her then 97-year-old mother and her sister, Joyce, then hospitalized with terminal cancer, became commonplace. Talk shows refused to book her, and Hollywood's powerful ignored her e-mails. Griffin, whose career has fed off her ability to redraw the lines of political correctness and free speech, had become a pariah. Today, she estimates that the stunt has cost her as much as $5 million in the past year. But her only regret since that fateful frame went live is having apologised at all.

Kathleen Mary Griffin was born on November 4, 1960 in the most typical of Midwest families of the Irish Catholic faith. She grew up in Chicago's middle-class suburbs with one sister and three brothers, their father, John, worked at a Radio Shack; mother Maggie worked as a cashier in a hospital. At the age of 18, Griffin moved to Los Angeles to pursue comedy, juggling jobs as a busser and a bank teller with classes at the Groundlings school. In 1996 she debuted on TV in her first notable role, on Brooke Shields's prime-time NBC sitcom, *Suddenly Susan*. Griffin continued to perform stand-up, increasingly basing her act on her real-life awkward encounters with celebrities, which landed her a string of hour-long comedy specials on Bravo and her own reality show, the Emmy-winning *My Life on the D-List*. In the past decade, Griffin's resumé has included stand-up (she has filmed more than 20 specials), albums (six, including the Grammy-winning Kathy Griffin: Calm Down Gurrl) and TV hosting jobs such as E!'s *Fashion Police* (where she replaced Rivers), an eponymous talk show and the Daytime Emmy Awards.

Last June, Griffin decided to heed the advice of Jim Carrey, who told her she had to harness the power that comes with being the most talked-about comic in the world; after all, Griffin ranked as the eighth most googled person on Earth last year. So she began writing her comeback. This has manifested as the Laugh Your Head Off tour, which, after cycling through an international run, is now warming up its North American leg. One of the tour's first stateside shows, at New York City's Carnegie Hall on June 26, reportedly sold out in one day.

In the midst of a changing tide in the public's perception of Griffin, Playboy.com executive editor **Shane Michael Singh** spent an afternoon at her sprawling residence to find out why she's confident we'll buy what she's selling this time. Singh reports, "Griffin didn't hesitate in offering her bedroom, nestled in an upstairs corner of what she refers to as her 'fuck-you house,' as the location for a lengthy conversation about both her exile and her comeback. On her nightstand, a copy of Michael Wolff's *Fire and Fury*. On the television, MSNBC. And in her eyes, hope. As caustic as her comedy is — and as ferocious as she likes to appear when the camera blinks red — the purported traitor is warm and wellspoken. Glimpses of her damaged ego reveal themselves briefly between long diatribes about First Amendment rights, sexism and the man she calls our 'accidental president.' Griffin is anything but weathered, she expressed her most human qualities, vacillating between humility, heartbreak and resilience — all while landing quip after impeccably timed quip.

"Griffin is eager to perform in America again because she believes that what happened to her can happen to any law-abiding citizen. Say what you will about the propriety of her comedy, but if patriotism remains defined by one's love of the Constitution and the freedom to harness the soul's fire against the odds for a better tomorrow, few people are more patriotic than Kathy Griffin."

PLAYBOY: The Laugh Your Head Off tour has booked some of the country's most famous theatres, including Carnegie Hall, the Dolby Theatre and Radio City Music Hall. This follows an international leg across 15 countries and 23 cities. In the spring you booked your first stateside talk-show appearances since the controversy, on *Real Time With Bill Maher and The View*, and in April you attended the White House Correspondents' Dinner in Washington, D.C. Are you feeling vindicated?

GRIFFIN: No, but I am feeling a change for the first time. America is taking its time "forgiving" me. Just last week a woman came up to me in a very fancy Santa Monica restaurant. She had wine sloshing and felt bold, I think, because she was with three friends. She came to my table and said, "Terrorist." So I don't feel totally vindicated, because I know this will be with me for the rest of my life. Every airport, every public setting. I never know who's going to come up and say something. There's still a feeling among the public that it's okay to do literally anything to me. If nothing else, one of the reasons this tour is important is that it's allowing me to go city to city and tell people they can hate the picture all they want. I have no problem with that. But I want everyone to know that if your 13-year-old kid takes that same picture and puts it on Twitter, he or she shouldn't be put under a twomonth federal investigation.

PLAYBOY: Do you believe the investigation by the Department of Justice was unfounded? If a non-U.S. citizen fake-beheaded the president on social media, the DOJ would likely investigate.

GRIFFIN: Truly, I didn't think the photo would be a big deal. I thought it would be on the same level as when I said "Suck it, Jesus!" after my first Emmy win, which was the first time the industry got mad at me. But the trolls love to reprint the photo and pixelate the mask as though it's a real human head and then hashtag it #WeWillNeverForget. That was the banner of 9/11, you unoriginal fucks! I'm not Mohammed Atta. I'm not one

of the 9/11 hijackers. Calm the fuck down.

It's important that I defend the photo. We still live in a free society. What is arguably a piece of art — however you want to define that picture — shouldn't be subject to what, in my opinion, was an abuse of power by the White House and the Department of Justice. It was overreach. I've been doing stand-up so long that I've actually seen the change; we've now gone so far to the right that it's confusing for all of us. A lot of people have told me if I'd taken this photo post–Harvey Weinstein it would've been different. People forget that the photo came out three weeks after James Comey was fired. So the timing worked for Trump's team perfectly. I wasn't conscious of it; when you do a wacky photo shoot, even if you're making fun of the president, you don't check his schedule. You don't ask yourself, "How could this serve him?"

PLAYBOY: Are you suggesting the president had something to gain by denouncing you on Twitter?

GRIFFIN: The timing is obvious to me, but I'm obsessed with this stuff. I'm obsessed with the news. Trump knows how to keep the chaos going. For example, my little story was a big giant story and then it was forgotten by a lot of people. That's his stock-in-trade. You know, it's almost like the way he is with money. He gets it, then he loses it. He gets it, then he's in debt.

PLAYBOY: It should be said that you knew President Trump well before his presidential campaign.

GRIFFIN: I was on The Apprentice twice as part of the challenges. I'm going to be honest: I didn't hate Trump at that time. I just thought he was a kook. Trump absolutely loved it when I would give him shit at NBC events. He would show up for the opening of an envelope. Now people get mad at me. They're like, "Why didn't you know this about Trump?" First of all, I wasn't looking. I've had these Trump stories for 20 years, but nobody wanted to hear about Donald Trump back then. You get a bunch of gay guys and soccer moms together and they want to hear about Real Housewives. They want to hear about the Kardashians. They want to hear about my mom. So to be able to resurrect these stories is honestly a fucking wet dream. One of the two stories in the show — besides my personal experience — involves Joan Rivers the day she called me to be on an Apprentice challenge. Of course I would do anything for Joan, so I spent the day with the Donald and his "lover" Ivanka, listening to those two fucking airheads. Talk about dumb and dumber.

PLAYBOY: Did you feel any compassion for Barron or Melania Trump following the stunt?

GRIFFIN: I think Barron has seen far worse, especially since the photo. Now that we've heard Karen McDougal talk about Trump walking her past Melania's closed door, saying she's having her quiet time, when she reads? Like, okay.

PLAYBOY: You've retracted both of your public apologies. Do you want the country's forgiveness?

GRIFFIN: It's not that I want forgiveness, it's that I've recognized there are folks, primarilywhite women, who believe Fox News. They think they have to forgive me — and they think I care. The truth is, my whole brand is about not giving a fuck. I'm the mayor of zero fucks, and that's what bought this house, cash outright. Obviously, I'm learning a lot. One of the things I'm open about is I understand that I absolutely have white privilege. Yes, I have earned every single penny myself, but if I had not been in my position when this happened — if I was still a bank teller or a busser — I don't know how I could have recovered. I certainly think of myself when I was a young comic pulling a restaurant job five days a week. A stunt like this would have absolutely ended my career. That's another reason I'm on a mission, aside from trying to make everybody laugh. I do want to be funny first, no matter what, but this is different. That's what I keep saying to people about this particular administration. It's just different. We can't be having these conversations in the way we had them before. I was not a George W. Bush fan, but it was nothing like this during W.'s presidency. During W you could still make jokes about the president.

PLAYBOY: Why did now feel like the right time to tour again in the States, where you're still receiving death threats?

GRIFFIN: You know, I talked to other people who'd been in scandals, trying to negotiate how much time I would need. Sharon Stone said, "You've got to leave the country for eight years." I said, "You first." I think Paul Reubens told me five years. Then I was like, "Wait a minute!" What I'm finding in this experience is if you give people a minute — and I'm happy to indulge all questions — I can usually explain it. I'm trying to explain what happened to me in such a way that people can put themselves in my shoes and say, "You know, she might be annoying, but this is not right. I don't think I'd like it if this happened to my mom, or my aunt, or my sister, or my cousin or my kid." Having lived through it, I feel I'm on a comedy mission to tell people that we need to talk about this.

Ninety percent of the Laugh Your Head Off show is going to be ridiculous jokes and hopefully laugh-out-loud stories. But I take a couple of five- or 10-minute breaks where I get real, which I've never done before in an act. I tried it the first night in Auckland, and if it hadn't worked, I wouldn't have done it again. Then I tried it the second night at the Sydney Opera House, and I found it to be the part of the show people remembered the most. Typically, that's not my thing. I shouldn't stop and take a serious moment. But because it's real, because everybody's watching this stuff, I thought, Okay, I'll let people in. And I'm selling tickets now.

PLAYBOY: Even so, you're still banned by some theatres, right?

GRIFFIN: This is the fight back. My own representatives, who I love dearly and who are all middle-aged white men, didn't think I could sell a ticket. Originally, after going overseas, I was like, "Let me take some time. Let me see how it feels." We're now in a world so divided that I understand I have to reach out to the people who have strong feelings about me, my comedy, my body of work, or people who just come to get the story. There are those people who come because, in a way, buying a ticket is their way of resisting. Whatever gets them there, as long as I make them laugh, that's fine. But Carnegie Hall is a big deal because they kept saying no. Now I'm going after my audience because I know I have to. I can't just go to friendly cities. It has been a knock-down, drag-out fight — fights I've been having with these guys my whole career. One of the many reasons they all think I'm an intolerable bitch is because I get on the phone and scream and say I'm not stopping. I said, "I'm going to play the Kennedy Center," and they said no. I said, "Well, I'm going to announce it on Bill Maher, so you'd better figure it out." And the Kennedy Center said no. The four times I played there before, I actually played as a guest, which means

A lot of people have told me if I'd taken this photo post–Harvey Weinstein it would've been different.

the rent was much lower. Now I have to pay $75,000 rent. You watch me sell it out.

I'll tell you right now, the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood initially said no. They finally said yes when they saw those tickets coming in. Radio City was the fucking battle royale. After I kick the bucket, I want some baby gay or young female comedian or young person of color who has a dream to say, "This bitch did it at 57! She did Radio City and Carnegie in one fucking week."

PLAYBOY: What could have changed the tide faster in your favour?

GRIFFIN: The show runners could have, with the flick of a switch. I'm not friends with Lorne Michaels. I don't think he's a fan of mine. Maybe he is, I don't know. But let's cut the shit. If he had put me in one sketch on last season's Saturday Night Live opener, it would have changed everything. I truly didn't predict it would take this long. When I finally was on Comedy Central's The President Show, I was practically crying. No one was trying to threaten me. [Creator and star] Tony Atamanuk is so talented and collaborative. I told him, "Tony, you're the one who lifted a finger." It's not that I didn't get support. Judd Apatow tweeted positive things; the same with Adam McKay. I respect Adam tremendously; he's a fucking genius filmmaker. He was being very supportive, e-mailing me, "Man, what's happened to you is fucked-up. It's abuse of power. It's not what this country's about." On the fourth or fifth e-mail, I wrote him a bitchy note back. "If only you knew someone who was maybe in the film or television industry who could give me 10."

So yeah, I got down in the mud. I was begging. I was pleading. I was hinting. The message I got very clearly was to get back to basics, honey. For some of the gigs I did overseas I was literally handing out flyers. My boyfriend and I would just do it for fun. We would be walking around Amsterdam; people are having delicious homemade sweets, and we're looking for a Kinkos. I would have walked a fucking sandwich board. I still have that whatever-it-takes mentality. I'm happy to admit I've failed many times.

PLAYBOY: You're referencing, I assume, the press conference you held with Lisa Bloom three days after you released the photo.

GRIFFIN: It exacerbated things. Cindi Berger, the famous publicist, was calling and screaming at me, and she wasn't even my publicist anymore. I'm in the middle of a shit storm and she's screaming at me to do an apology tape. So I put out that apology tape, which turned on me. Lisa Bloom was the only one who called, and that whole thing was a disaster, so fuck her and the horse she flew in on. She's awful. She was representing Harvey Weinstein at the same time and didn't bother to mention that.

PLAYBOY: You didn't know?

GRIFFIN: The right wing likes to attack me. They're like, "You knew about Weinstein." I met Harvey Weinstein one time, sitting next to him at a roast for Quentin Tarantino. That's it. I don't have his cell number, you know? That's how crazy the wall of shit gets. It's not just "You said something that offends me and here's why." It's got tentacles that reach out: "You're in the Weinstein Hollywood crowd." I'm like, "Um, no."

PLAYBOY: What's your relationship with the First Amendment? Does the country need a refresher on it?

GRIFFIN: It's the amendment I know the best, that's for sure. It's how I make my living. It's how you make your living. One thing that bothers me is how the Milo Yiannopouloses and Ann Coulters of the world have coopted the term free speech. The march in Charlottesville? Not the free speech we're talking about. A woman was murdered by a Dodge Challenger driven by a guy named James Alex Fields Jr., and Jason Kessler organized the rally. I think about that woman's family all the time. Not only were other people seriously injured that day, but Heather Heyer was brutally mowed down. Then it became about the marchers' right to assemble, and then it became funny because they had tiki torches. I'm like, Heather Heyer is dead for a truly peaceful protest.

PLAYBOY: Is the alt-right's definition of free speech different from the rest of the country's?

GRIFFIN: I had no idea about the Nazi YouTube channels. How are young people even exposed to people like this? When I was that age, that kind of verbiage, or even that kind of thought, was something we laughed at. It was what the older aunts and uncles said, and we'd all be like, "Yeah, whatever." That is what surprises me. Who the fuck thinks a guy as young as Milo Yiannopoulos is the face of free speech? And what's going to happen to all the ladies who were giving me a standing ovation in Kentucky three years ago? I don't know where they stand. I don't know where they stand with the country, and I don't know where I stand with them.

PLAYBOY: What was the most invasive question the Secret Service asked you during its investigation?

GRIFFIN: They said they were tapping my phones. I couldn't prove it, but of course I had to turn that into a joke on day one. I was having dinner downstairs with Kris Jenner, Rita Wilson and Melanie Griffith, and I'm like, "All right, if anyone's listening, we're starting dessert! Not looking to hurt anybody!" Until I was exonerated, it became this thing where I'd tell anybody who came over that they might be surveilled. And not one person cared. It's interesting; I was proud of myself when they raided Paul Manafort's home — I was like, I know exactly how this works. The feds would call my lawyers every single day and say, "You know, we could do a house call 24/7." I was determined not to have that happen, because I was fearful they might try to drum up a charge. The feeling of having the country so against me... I thought, Kathy could go bye-bye real fast and nobody would give a shit. They would think I had it coming.

PLAYBOY: Your mother, Maggie, has been a hallmark of your stand-up for more than a decade and was everpresent on your reality show. How has your relationship with her changed in the past year?

GRIFFIN: The good news is that even my mom doesn't take Fox News seriously anymore. It did take me about two hours to convince her I'm not "an ISIS," because she doesn't like to wear her hearing aids, she feels they're not flattering. So that moment of having to explain to your 97-year-old alcoholic mother, who's watching Fox News with the sound off and seeing pictures of me... I don't know what she saw or heard, but my favorite line of hers was "Well, I was watching Fox News, and do you know not one of those guys had your back?" I go, "Mom, let's break it down. First of all, guys." We joke about it now. I'm happy to commit voter fraud with my mom and just dangle the chad for her, because she can't be trusted at this point.

PLAYBOY: Do you think her decision to still watch Fox News, despite personal knowledge

I found out last week that I'm on another kill list. At this point I'm just like, Oh, again?

that it can range from slightly biased to outright incorrect, represents this country's generational divide?

GRIFFIN: My mom gets a pass because she's so old, but that wasn't the Maggie Griffin, or any other Griffin, I grew up with We're from Chicago. We were considered middle class. My mom always worked, even after she had kids. My dad worked 60 hours a week in a retail store Our dinner-table discussions were always political conversations about what alderman was on the take and who was on the front page of the Tribune.

I don't know if you remember the Nazis marching in Skokie, Illinois, but that was the biggest story in Chicagoland for 10 years. We argued about it at our dinner table a million times. As Griffins and as Irish Democrats we agreed they had the right to march, but it's offensive, so you have the right to stand on the curb and yell at them. I don't really know why my mom has become the way she is I have theories, but sometimes I honestly think it's because Fox News has bright colors and the ladies look like the Real Housewives Maybe my mom finds that comforting. Also, they project. They're the loudest channel because they know Maggie's listening, so a lot of their broadcasts are shouting. She likes that too

PLAYBOY: One of the first moments you realized the photo was a mistake was when Rosie O'Donnell phoned you and asked whether you had considered how the image might affect the mother of Daniel Pearl, the American Israeli journalist whom terrorists beheaded in 2002 Did you ever call Pearl's family to apologise?

GRIFFIN: Oh gosh, no. Number one, the last person they probably want to hear from is an obnoxious comedian. And as much as I love to be an activist in my own way, that would be very much out of my lane. What was interesting about that was having performed for the troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Uzbekistan — all gone I really do try to walk the line. I've come under criticism my whole career because I do an atypical type of standup I do stories more than jokes. Also, I'm a woman, and I'm not an attractive woman I don't talk with a baby voice. I don't have a big studio behind me I've performed at Walter Reed hospital and all this other stuff, and it's nothing but a win for the person performing. To perform in a war zone for the troops is different. That's something I struggle with all the time: the Ellens of the world who think I'm classless Yeah, but you could maybe give me a little credit for performing in war zones. Or not. Okay, I guess not

PLAYBOY: In the midst of dealing with the Department of Justice, you were also fired by CNN, and your tour was cancelled in every city. As this played out, your sister, Joyce, was in the hospital, battling terminal cancer, a fight she lost in September How did you comfort her while dealing with your own crises?

GRIFFIN: You compartmentalise like a motherfucker. Just so everyone knows, Joyce was the focus I knew if I was going to see my mom or my sister or my brother, that we would talk about my situation for 30 seconds. Then it was pretty much off the table — though my sister would pipe up every so often and be like, "You know, this is bullshit." And until her dying day, she had a pussy hat on She was gay, and she was a schoolteacher when you couldn't be out. So she's got a great story herself

That's one thing I have a lot of practice in. After all these years, there have been many times when I've had an eight p m. show and gotten some bad news in my life at 7:40 p m. I'll be crying, and then I flip the switch. During this experience I've had to do a lot of flipping the switch. When you're facing somebody in the hospital with cancer, it's quite easy to put everything aside. You talk about perspective: Okay, really, my little problem? One thing that made those worlds intersect, which was painful, was that my sister got death threats in the hospital.

PLAYBOY: What has been the extent of the death threats?

GRIFFIN: I found out last week that I'm on another kill list. I can't say the agency, but it's a federal agency, and they contacted my lawyer and told him there's a kill list of 40 I'm on it and they want to make me aware. At this point I'm just like, Oh, again?

The fact that this stuff is happening to a comedian? It doesn't matter if you like me or my comedy; you shouldn't want this to be happening in your country. These folks don't play When I started getting stuff delivered to the house, at first I thought, Okay, you can google where celebrities live, but at least I'm safe. Nobody can get in. But then you get into the category of what to reveal to family members and when. And what do they want to know, and when am I forcing too much on them at a time when they're dealing with something much more real? At the same time that two federal agencies were investigating me, my lawyer was negotiating the situation with the FBI, which keeps us abreast of what they call "credible threats." And those are still coming in. But fear is one of those things you just deal with, you know? I know this shouldn't make me laugh, but I'm now laughing at the most twisted shit, because the situation is so crazy and continues to get crazier When people come up to me and say, "I'm so glad that whole Trump thing is over," I have to correct them and say, "I'm sorry. I don't mean to be rude, but it's not." PLAYBOY. In the past year, did you ever find yourself leaning on your Catholic faith? GRIFFIN Oh, no. I'm a fallen Catholic who fell so hard I woke up in Beijing. But many times I would just walk around being like,

All right, higher power or whatever you want to be called, if you exist, help. I'm not a religious person — which, by the way, has become anathema. There was a time when you could stand onstage at any comedy club and say, "I'm an atheist. Here are some jokes about it." Now Americans are so fucking freaked out about that.

PLAYBOY: In July 1972 Jane Fonda famously visited North Vietnam, where she was photographed with an anti-aircraft gun. That photo, which earned her the nickname Hanoi Jane, sparked outrage across the country, and Fonda still has to apologize for it four decades later. Do you identify with her?

GRIFFIN: Yes. I reached out to her many times. I would have times during this period when I was up and down. Sometimes I just wanted to focus on something else. I did a ton of writing, and every so often I would shoot out an e-mail. I wrote Fonda, "Where the fuck have you been?" It was so funny. I sent one to Gloria Steinem too. I love Gloria — we're not besties, but we're friends and I respect her tremendously. I grew up wanting to be her. I met her when I turned 50 and cold-called her to take her to dinner. It was the greatest 50th birthday I could ever have wanted. I thought, I hope I know Steinem well enough to do this. I just wrote, "Hey, it's Kathy Griffin. Where the fuck have you been?" She immediately called me back, saying "I've been thinking about you," and blah, blah, blah. She was one of the first people I told, "I need you to say something publicly." She was like, "I thought you were covered by your comedy friends and your Hollywood friends."

PLAYBOY: Why do you think you deserve the support of celebrities when so much of your success has been based on mocking them?

GRIFFIN: Because those same celebrities know that when the chips are down — and when they have been down — I am absolutely there for them. It was painful when certain people I was happy to take calls from during bad times didn't feel the same way. And it was harder when I would reach out and say, "I need you," and some people were just not having it. Most people avoided me. Al Franken literally called me that day and said, "I can't be associated with you." And I was hosting two book events for him for nothing. I've had fund-raisers for him at this home. I thought I was being nice and being a good Democrat.

PLAYBOY: Along with O'Donnell and Carrey, Aubrey Plaza, Jimmy Kimmel and Katt Williams are some of the few public people who offered you support or advice. As you've said, in addition to celebrity friends, many people on the management side of your career denounced or ignored you. Whose support or abandonment surprised you the most?

GRIFFIN: Well, obviously Anderson Cooper, because I really thought we were solid. Everybody knows that feeling of "Oh no, not that guy." I don't have a funny spin on it, because it's part of CNN firing me. A lot of people know me only from the CNN New Year's Eve special. I got my second book deal because of that show. I wouldn't wish having one's entire body of work erased overnight on my worst enemy.

PLAYBOY: Would you be open to mending things with him at this point?

GRIFFIN: I don't think it's me who has to do the mending. That's how I feel. Remember, this is a guy who let five months pass before he texted me.

PLAYBOY: So he did finally reach out to you.

GRIFFIN: Yeah, and it was a bitchy text. He was like, "Well, I guess you're mad at me," and, "After I've defended you for years...." That's another thing: If I hear one more person say "I've defended you." You know what? Clean your own side of the fucking street. "I've defended you" implies they've had to defend me. It's such a backhanded compliment. "I've defended you." I wouldn't say it to my cousin.

PLAYBOY: If she were alive today, what do you think Joan Rivers would have said about all this?

GRIFFIN: You're not going to believe this shit — and I'm going to try not to cry — but Joan told me at our final dinner, "Don't make an enemy of Trump. Don't ever go up against Donald." But Joan and I were politically diametrically opposed. She was Republican, I'm a Democrat. Who cares? I loved her and respected her and hung on her every word. And she was as dreamy as you would imagine. If you recall, there was a long time when she was viewed as the most evil bitch in the world. "How can you even like her? She's mean." I would talk to Don Rickles about it. Believe it or not, Rickles, until the day he died, said, "Honey, I hate when they call me an insult comic." I watched how Joan was vilified. Luckily, in the end she got the respect she deserved.

PLAYBOY: The profiles of many comedians, especially television hosts including Jimmy Kimmel, Stephen Colbert and Samantha Bee, have soared due to their criticism of Trump. Jimmy Fallon, however, has been faulted for not taking a harder stance against the Trump administration on The Tonight Show. Do you hold any bitterness toward comics who have played it safe?

GRIFFIN: Yeah, I think that's bullshit, I'm sorry. I think comics who don't talk about Trump — it's like the old Michael Jordan. Michael Jordan, you have enough money now; it's time you have a LeBron moment and do something important. I really think it's the responsibility of a comedian to push the envelope. On the other hand, I respect all kinds of comics. I'm just saying, in this day and age, it's different. Chelsea Handler is not a big fan of mine, but I don't care. It's not about that. When Chelsea achieves something, it's a fucking benchmark. I really admire her. You know what she's doing now? She's fucking dropped out and doing real activism. She's going Alyssa Milano style, town to town. And she's a different person. I loved her on Girls Behaving Badly, and I loved her E! show. And trust me, I wish I would have had the opportunity to get the support of a network and all that other stuff I've yet to experience.

What's going to happen to all the ladies who were giving me a standing ovation in Kentucky three years ago?

PLAYBOY: On the topic of women supporting women, you've said you haven't felt welcomed by the #MeToo and Time's Up movements. Why?

GRIFFIN: I have no issues with #MeToo and Time's Up. I think they're both amazing. Keep going. But I have to admit I'm a little bitchy and insulted, because they haven't really reached out to me or embraced me in any way. Sharon Stone did a great interview on CBS Sunday Morning, I think, where the interviewer asked about #MeToo, and she just laughed. I thought, Yeah, she's not comfortable. I can tell you I've talked to many other actresses of a certain age. You would know their names, and if you start to ask yourself, "I wonder why this person hasn't come forward?" I think there's a reason Sharon just laughed. I think she's still scared. And that used to be unimaginable to me. Prior to this experience happening to me, I would have thought that

Sharon Stone was fucking untouchable, that if Sharon Stone wanted to talk shit about any politician of any party, she just could. And I watched it and thought, She can't. She can't.

PLAYBOY: So you don't think #MeToo and Time's Up will effect real change for women?

GRIFFIN: Time's not up. I'm chairman of the Time's Not Up Yet campaign. I'm just saying, ladies, gays, people of color time's not up. Time's Up is a cute slogan, but sorry, the new day on the horizon is not tomorrow. I'm trying to manage expectations as someone who has lived through it. And let me be clear: I don't think this is entertainment-focused at all. When I worked at Polly's Pies, it happened there. When I worked at a bank, it happened there. It happens everywhere, and it happens more outside the entertainment industry, because there's no spotlight. But in the middle of #MeToo and Trump and Time's Up, Tony Robbins is in a fucking stadium [during a March 2018 seminar in San Jose, California], physically pushing a woman, when, I assume, she's been closely tied to #MeToo and all that that implies. That's the sort of thing that makes me think our work here is not done. I kind of thought it was funny at the time, but he's saying that he's sticking up for his poor CEOs, who can barely hire a gorgeous woman now. And the way he keeps turning to the crowd, like "Am I right?" And then the lemmings are in the middle. I would be on my feet. I would be in jail. I'm not strong, but I'd take him out at the knees.

PLAYBOY: But many men, such as Matt Lauer and Billy Bush, have lost their careers.

GRIFFIN: Billy Bush got a $9 million severance package when he had to be fired from Today. Also, he's a middle-aged white guy. He'll probably be back and be fine. By the way, Billy Bush did send me a card, and I read it live in the show. I call it accidentally hilarious.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about a different man. Randy Bick, your boyfriend since 2011, is almost two decades younger than you. He's also your tour manager. What's different about dating a younger man?

GRIFFIN: One of the reasons Randy and I get along is because, being 18 years my junior, he didn't grow up in the same sexist environment I did. He didn't come to the table thinking women weren't equal. I understand why so many younger people can't fathom that time, but I'm happy to tell them about it, because we may be on the brink of it again. We also work well together because we have our work relationship and our romantic relationship. He's a mellow, calm, smart guy, and that's what I like, because I'm a high-strung motherfucker.

PLAYBOY: What happens on November 3, 2020? Oprah Winfrey has confirmed that she won't run, but is she still the Democrats' best hope, mere months before a strong candidate needs to emerge?

GRIFFIN: Compared to Trump? Hell yeah. One of my dreams is to have Trump name state capitals. See if he even knows basic state capitals. I'm convinced he doesn't know where he's bombing. I'm convinced he knows nothing about the geography of Syria. I don't think he can name five cities in Syria. He hasn't been to Afghanistan, Iran or Iraq, which is unbelievable because he's the most militaristic person ever. Why don't you go there if you're so militaristic?

As much as I love to make fun of Oprah, in this environment I don't see how she wouldn't come out of it just eviscerated. I fear they would spread so much false information about her, and people would believe it. If the question was whether she could start in five minutes, I'd say absolutely. But it wouldn't be good for her. Can you imagine the shit they would make up? If Hillary's killing children in a pizza parlor, imagine what they want to do to Oprah. They freaked out with a black man. A black woman? They're going to fucking lose their shit. They're going to start sending missiles to countries they can't name.

PLAYBOY: So how does this chapter of your life end? Or is this only the beginning?

GRIFFIN: I've got to take whatever gigs come my way. I'm proud that I've built my whole career. I'm my mother's daughter. My dad was the same way: Be professional. Be on time. Know your material. As a comic, I've done more televised specials than anyone. I wanted to be in the Guinness Book of World Records as an inspiration to younger folks. To have that stuff go away overnight, . . I don't know if I can get it back. One of my dreams is, at this age and at this level, typically most comedians have done one seminal film role. Robin Williams was in Good Will Hunting. Alan Arkin won an Academy Award for Little Miss Sunshine, and he was in Second City prior to that. George Carlin would show up in movies. There's a real history there. That's one dream. I'm definitely still hopeful. But do you know what my real dream is? I would love to do a speaking tour.

PLAYBOY: Like a college speaking tour?

GRIFFIN: Yes, because I have decades of straight-up experience about a lot of shit. I'm certainly not from a famous family or a wealthy family, but I'm happy to share any and all of it. I'm so grateful when folks share it with me, not just Joan and Don but anybody. Aubrey Plaza's younger than me, and the stories she shares are so important. When I talk about supporting women and gays, it's like the women have gotten knocked out. It's one of the reasons I'm a fan of Suze Orman. She has helped me tremendously with financial advice. She's never steered me wrong. Her premise is that women have to start talking about money honestly and not lying and acting like they get paid more.

One thing that's frustrating to me. When are people going to connect the dots, just as citizens? The idea that local small-time newspapers are going away? I want to reach out to people and say, "Please fight for this." I try to follow as much broad news as possible. People don't understand how it affects them until it affects them. I feel this is my responsibility. I would love to sit down in schools of any kind with a First Amendment professor or the women's studies department and talk to them about anything, from my case to previous experiences. Because when I do talk to younger women and tell them about my experiences when I was their age I think I did my first commercial when I was 17 younger folks in the industry sometimes think I'm making it up.

I'm all for aspiration. I am a capitalist, but you've got to put the work in. And you should enjoy doing it. It shouldn't be "Ugh, I have to work." It should be "I'm going to find something I like to do, and I'm going to do it to the best of my ability." What I'm benefiting from, and what I'm really enjoying, is the fact that people have stopped this bullshit about staying in your lane. Everyone understands it's all mixed now. We have a pop culture president. This is something that personally happened to me. It's historic. It's unprecedented in the history of the United States. My act has always been about what's going on, and now I really, really have a story to tell. ■

I'm chairman of the Time's Not Up Yet campaign. Time's Up is a cute slogan, but the new day is not tomorrow.

Karlee Lauryn

Photographed by ARTHUR ST. JOHN Text by NELLY MADUNA
HMUA: ESTER P.

Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now?
I was born in Scottsbluff Nebraska and grew up in Gering Nebraska. I currently live in the beautiful city of Colorado Springs, CO

You're on the cover of Playboy Australia, what does this mean to you?
I can't describe the feeling at all. It feels unreal to me. To me it means that I can do anything. When I was about 8 years old I found my dad's playboy and I knew instantly that I wanted to be just as pretty as those girls and be in there when I grow up. I never thought this day would come. It's a truly phenomenal feeling

What's your favourite colour?
I'm always torn between blue & purple

Favourite style of music? Favourite artist?
I can get down to anything, but mostly Hip hop. I'm in love with Trey Songz.

Favourite movie of all time?
The Eye with Jessica Alba

Is fitness important to you? How often do you work out?
Yes, very important. I recently started going every day to the gym because I have some goals to reach

Describe your perfect date
The perfect date would be going to eat somewhere breakfast like in sweat pants and come home and watch scary movies

Your favourite body part?
My back dimples

Favourite body part of the opposite sex?
I'm not quite sure why, but I love many hands

Any pet peeves?
Not too many, I'm a pretty laid-back lady but I really dislike controlling men

Tell us something about you not too many people know
I am the baby of seven kids

Describe yourself using only 3 adjectives.
Outgoing, loving, and fun.

Read the book or watch the movie?
I'm trying to read more, but honestly, watch it

If you can change any one thing about you, what would it be?
Not to have anxiety and just let life be and not worry about a thing

Besides modelling, what other interests do you have?
Love animals and kids so I want to start a business someday with a day-care on one side and a doggy day-care on the other end

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
Learning the right angles

Where is your favourite vacation destination?
Miami

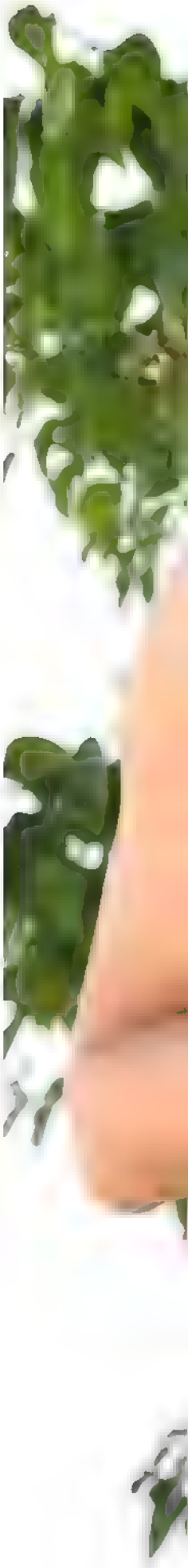
Sightseeing or laying on the beach with a drink?
Tough question. Sightseeing then laying on the beach

What is your favourite alcohol drink?
Mudslide

If you can visit any city right now, where would you like to go?
London

Would you consider yourself an entrepreneur? Any business ideas / plans you're working on?
Yes. My goal is to be my own boss. I plan on focusing on my modeling career and building brand.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
Single still, living in a big city in a fancy studio with my business right below



Lakeith Stanfield

With festival smash Sorry to Bother You, the enthralling young actor has arrived. Here, he talks aspiration, Atlanta and the truth behind his surreal Oscars cameo

Q1: *Your new movie Sorry to Bother You has some of the most shocking twists in recent memory. Without giving too much away, were you prepared for that when you first got the script?*

STANFIELD: No one gave me any warning, which I think is a good way to go into this kind of story — straight in. Once I read it, I was like, "Oh, totally, we have to do this." It hopped off the page. Normally, to make a movie like this you would need a multimillion-dollar budget. I don't know what the exact numbers were, but they were pretty low. Sometimes my trailer was a van, you know what I mean? But we found a way to make it happen. We had a vision. Sometimes it's the best working environment when everyone builds from the trenches together. You can really get on the ground and get dirty.

Q2: *Your character, Cassius Green, is a telemarketer who, having learned to use his "white voice," gets a big promotion that comes with increasingly lavish and weird perks. You're 26 and have been acting for a decade. In your own career, has it ever felt as though you were leaving behind the people you came up with?*

STANFIELD: Yeah. When I first moved to Los Angeles, it was definitely a big shift for me. Certain people around me didn't understand why I would be trying to pursue this weird job. I had conversations with people very similar to those Cassius has with Detroit [Cassius's girlfriend, played by Tessa Thompson]. But it hasn't really started feeling super weird until now. I was in L.A. recently, in my car at a stoplight, and some dude just runs up to my passenger-side window, takes a selfie and runs off. Just selfie, then gone. I was like, Yeah, that's never happened before. Something is different.

Q3: *Cassius also tells Detroit, "I'm just out here surviving, and what I'm doing right now won't even matter." Do you share that anxiety about leaving your mark on the world?*

STANFIELD: No. Cassius wants to be remembered, to leave something behind. I think to some extent we all do, but it's not my primary concern. Maybe what you leave behind in your work is cool, but I wouldn't want my work to be ascribed only to me. I'm more of a collaborator. I love family, and I love the idea of leaving things to family and having generational things that can be looked back on — history, generational wealth. But people aren't as special as we tell ourselves. I think other things are more important than humans, personally.

Q4: *Do you think it's ultimately a hopeful movie?*

STANFIELD: I do. I walk away with a sense of newfound hope, remembering what's important to tell yourself — especially when you're rising in terms of fame or money or anything like that. Remembering to try to stay grounded and keep good people around you who will tell you when you're fucking up or off your square. Sorry to Bother You is a beautiful rags-to-riches story. I know it sounds corny, but it's true: You can have all the things in the world and be miserable.

Q5: *Were you raised in a religious household?*

STANFIELD: Mm-hmm. I was raised very

BY **JAMES RICKMAN** ILLUSTRATION BY **DANIELLE LEVITT**

I think other things are more important than humans, personally.

religious. It wasn't until I was older that I started to comprehend things differently, in a way that was sort of opposite to what I'd been taught. I went through a phase when I dropped all religion, but then I went back, thinking maybe it's some mixture in between the two. And now I just say, "I don't know." But I do like the Bible. It has a lot of real-world implications and seems to be based on some astrological things, so if you're into trying to connect to something larger than yourself, it's definitely worth a read. But try to read it outside the confines of any given religion. Read it for yourself and come up with your own conclusions.

Q6: *What denomination were you raised in?*

STANFIELD: Protestant — yeah, Protestant. Latter Day Saints, I think it's called. No. Seventh-Day Adventist! Yeah, they used to say all those words, but I never really knew what they meant. It was a strange one. Baptized, drinking the blood of Jesus, eating of the flesh, whatever, and anointments and people falling on the ground, shaking and speaking in tongues. Great music. I was in the choir. Like I said, as of late I'm more in the middle of things. I definitely don't subscribe to religion, but I think there's something to be said for spirituality and finding one's footing in that place.

Q7: *Where else do you turn when you need solace or inspiration?*

STANFIELD: Music helps. I really love music. I like this compilation XXYYXX by XXYYXX. I listen to some Beethoven, some Bach every now and again, Yo-Yo Ma and shit like that. It's nice and soothing. I like Moroccan music

I was in a foreign body at the Oscars. It felt appropriate to be screaming "Get out!" at that audience.

and Black Coffee and sounds of nature. I kind of throw it around.

Q8: *You recently wrote and directed a short film, The Road. Can you tell us about that?*

STANFIELD: I wrote and shot that while I was filming the TV show Atlanta. It was inspired by a conversation between Donald Glover and Brian Tyree Henry about race and power and politics. I was sitting at the table with these two very smart people who were just volleying, and I was in the middle like, "Oh, shit." It inspired me to take my friend, who worked with me on the project, and sort of make him represent some of those things. And being in Atlanta, which is a really black city, there's this interesting aspect about race relations and things of that nature.

Q9: *Do you think you'll do more writing and directing?*

STANFIELD: Oh, man, I really want to slowly but surely move into more behind-the-scenes stuff. I'm just trying to take it all in, spend some time with heroes, get out there in the field, try to learn.

Q10: *You clearly have an innate ability to get in front of people and compel their attention — your career started when you jumped up on a table or chair and started air surfing in front of an agent. Do you really want to dial back the performance part?*

STANFIELD: Attention is not always that much fun. I mean, I love telling stories, but I don't really like having attention on me, you know what I mean? It's surface level. I'm more into deep connections. I love everyone who supports me, but the interaction on a fame level is just not the same and — I don't know, it's not for me.

Q11: *You recently tweeted a question: "Do you separate artist from art?" What inspired that?*

STANFIELD: Twitter is an interesting platform. I have fun interacting with people on it and wondering what the overall consensus is on questions like that. In this day and age of information and accessibility to artists, you can get more of an insight into who people are, and it gives you an opportunity to create ideas and judgments about that. Personally I think the less information I have about the artist the better, because it allows me to just enjoy the art. Sometimes those things can influence how you think. So I think it's better to just be like, "Show the art and shut up."

Q12: *Let's talk about Atlanta. In the first episode we see your character, Darius, baking cookies. Do you think Darius might pursue food as a career, or is there any particular way you see him developing in five or 10 years?*

STANFIELD: I hope not, because Darius's recipes are quite a bit stranger than one might imagine. I'm actually there in his body, cooking, so I can tell you that half the stuff he makes — I don't know if anybody would really want to indulge in it. But you never know. I mean, if you want some pasta with Darius's foot stuck in it — literally his foot stuck in it — then you might be interested.

Q13: *Do you see anything else in his future?*

STANFIELD: I never see his past or his future. Darius is always in the now. In his estimation it's all the same. Past, present and future all exist right now. Darius is everywhere.

Q14: *You first met Donald Glover at a party as a fan of his music persona, Childish Gambino, right?*

STANFIELD: I still call him Gambino. That's the only thing I knew! I didn't know he was an actor. I didn't know he was on Community. I didn't really watch much TV coming up, and actually I'd only heard a couple of his freestyles. But yeah, I had heard him rap before, and I thought he was very courageous for the way

that he rapped because it felt like he was coming from the heart in a way I hadn't heard in a while. Seeing him at that party, I said, "Oh shit! Yeah, man, I know who you are." And he was like, "I think you'd be great for this role." The first thought that crossed my mind was, Wow, I must have some really fuckin' good dance moves. Because I was on the dance floor, just gettin' it by myself. I mean, I gotta hit the dance floor; it's not there for nothing. And I guess he thought I had some good moves; that's what I thought. Later I found out that he'd seen something else that I had been in and thought I might be good for Darius. But either way, in the moment I was like, "Oh shit. Cool, man, here's my info."

Q15: *A lot of actors can't stand to watch themselves on the screen. Is that a problem for you?*

STANFIELD: I definitely get that sense of it. I'm not that interested in looking at myself — but when I'm watching, I don't really feel like I'm watching me, funny enough. It kind of feels like I'm just watching that character, and I'm able to do it more and more as I go on and remove myself from the equation. Right now I feel it's relatively easy, because I can let go of my relationship to the project and I can let go of the character. No matter how many times people run up to me and say, "Get out!" or ask to measure my tree, I can still develop a level of distance from the character, because I let it go.

Q16: *This year's Oscars featured a memorable cameo from your Get Out character. When that idea was proposed to you, what was your initial reaction?*

STANFIELD: That there couldn't be a better place to do something like this. Say you take an average person and plop them right in the middle of an Oscars ceremony; it's like warping them into a whole nother dimension. And I felt that way. It was my first Oscars thing. I had been to other awards ceremonies, and all of them had felt the same to me — like a strange twilight zone that you're being zoomed into. All of a sudden you're standing next to all these people with lights and cameras flashing all over, and there's sort of an underbelly, with security and people with guns taking care of jewelry. It's a strange place. So playing that character reminded me of the party scene in Get Out — not the sense of the racism but just feeling like I was in a new environment. So in the sense that Andre, my character in Get Out, was sort of taken over by something entering his body, I kind of felt like I was in a foreign body at the Oscars. It felt appropriate to be screaming "Get out!" at that audience.

Q17: *After that moment, you lingered onstage, which really cranked up the tension. Was that a conscious choice?*

STANFIELD: Well, I tried to tell everyone after I got done with the "get out" thing that I was sorry to bother them, but they cut my mike. So it kind of looked like I was just standing there, and no one else knows it, but actually I said, "Sorry to bother you." No one knew I was going to do it. I didn't even know I was going to do it. It just kind of happened in the moment.

Q18: *Other than Sorry to Bother You, do you have any upcoming projects you're particularly excited about?*

STANFIELD: I just wrapped up a movie called The Girl in the Spider's Web, which is the next instalment in the Millennium series, the first of which was The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo. I can't wait till we see a trailer for it because I think it's going to be quite the spectacle.

Q19: *Is that your first big action movie?*

STANFIELD: I think so, if you don't count The Purge: Anarchy — I don't know if that's an action movie. This time I'm right in the centre of the fire. My character is attempting to track down Lisbeth Salander. I can't release many details as to why, but he's trying to track her down, and it's a fun ride watching them duke it out. It's a big, beautiful-looking film from what I've seen so far. There are some other things I won't talk about [in a posh voice] because I love keeping an element of mysteria.

Q20: *Speaking of mysteria, last question: Do you have recurring dreams?*

STANFIELD: I do, actually. One of them is a great, expansive dream where I'm flying around everywhere. That one happened a lot when I was younger and then it went away, but it's come back recently, which I think is a good sign. I feel like that dream represents some kind of exploration of freedom. I've had another recurring dream that isn't so good, about being pursued by law enforcement for some reason. That dream started surfacing after I did the movie Crown Heights. Now it seems to be dissipating, which is great, because I don't like those dreams. I'd much rather be flying. ■

HEF'S FIRST ROAST • CLASSIC PLAYMATES • VINTAGE CARTOONS • BEHIND THE SCENES OF A BELOVED COVER

HERITAGE

PLAYBOY GOES TO THE MOVIES

Some of Hollywood's greatest — and most notorious — productions started life in the pages of Playboy; these are their stories, from The Hustler to The Hurt Locker

BY NICK ROGERS

Hollywood may be awash in adaptations, sequels, prequels and reboots, but we can't complain about the many times it has turned to playboy for source material. The films that have sprung from works of short fiction or nonfiction originally published in these pages span five decades and genres as diverse as science fiction, sports, horror and...however you'd classify a Charlie Sheen biker flick.

Here's a look at our favourite cinematic classics and curios that began life as original PLAYBOY stories.

Sinking the Eight Ball

The Hustler, Walter S. Tevis's short story about a pool shark stalking dangerous prey, exceeds the "nice jolts" promised by our January 1957 issue's *Playbill*. Richard Tyler's accompanying illustration reflects the boldness with which protagonist Sam Willis tries to redraw his life, while Tevis's tale belies the foolhardy — and in this case fatal — belief that a fresh start can altogether change a person or erase their vulnerabilities.

The 1961 film of the same name rechristens Sam as Fast Eddie Felson and lets him live, albeit with damning consequences. Paul Newman tapped reservoirs of resignation and regret to create the indelible character, but years later he faulted his own performance, telling Playboy in 1983 that he felt he had been "working too hard, showing too much" — the lament of an idol without an Oscar. Four years later, he got one — for reviving Fast Eddie in 1986's The Color of Money, another film based on a Tevis story. As Fast Eddie says, "The balls roll funny for everybody, kiddo."

What's the Buzz?

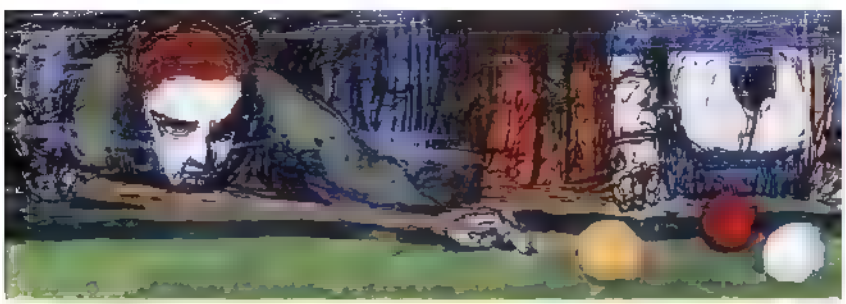
Paris-born British author George Langelaan's classic *The Fly* (June 1957) introduces readers to a scientist who accidentally fuses his genes with a housefly and mutates into a man-insect hybrid. The narrator's anxieties about technology, government secrecy and self-transformation may well have reflected Langelaan's own: As a spy in World War II, he underwent facial reconstruction to make his features less conspicuous.

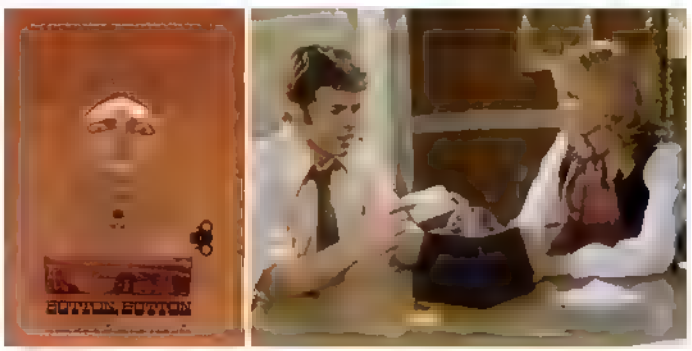
Prioritising lore over gore, the 1958 film based on the playboy story is most famous for its human-fly screaming "Help me!" as a hungry spider advances. The movie shies away from Langelaan's harsher themes, justifying even the most horrifying outcomes of scientific exploration as manifest destiny. Langelaan's vividly gruesome but unexpectedly tender approach is more accurately captured in David Cronenberg's dark, operatic version of The Fly (1986), starring Jeff Goldblum. Unrelentingly disgusting and unforgettably somber, its climax tragically evokes the Langelaan line "No matter how awful the result of your experiment or accident, you are alive, you are a man, a brain...and you have a soul."

All Smiles

Ray Russell, Playboy's first fiction editor, commissioned strong yarns for the magazine while spinning some himself, including Sardonicus, a horror story that Stephen King dubbed "perhaps the finest example of the modern Gothic ever written."

A morbidly witty story about a doctor lured by a lost lover to cure her titular husband's ghoulish perma-grin, *Sardonicus* (January 1961) was the perfect cinematic fit for producer-director William Castle, who came to consider *Mr Sardonicus* (for which Russell wrote the screenplay) among his finest productions. The B-movie king of gimmicks such as skeletons dangling from theater rafters and seats rigged to rumble, Castle countered Columbia Pictures' demand for a happier ending with a "Punishment Poll": Just as the movie reaches its climax, Castle himself appears onscreen, ostensibly to give the audience the opportunity to decide Sardonicus's fate. Thumbs up? Life. Thumbs down? Death. Castle tabulates the "votes" and declares, smiling, "No mercy? So be it." Most film historians agree Castle never shot a merciful outcome, certain that crowds would choose condemnation — a notion, like the story, worthy of chuckles and chills.

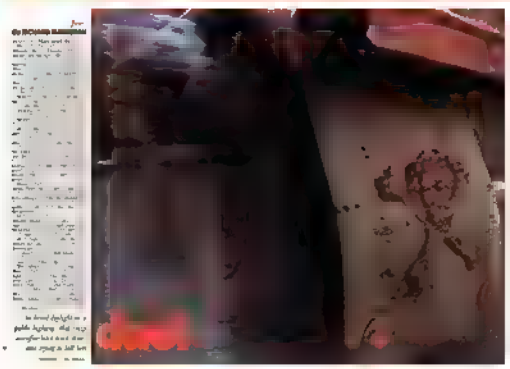




The Hustler, the 1961 film based on Walter S. Tevis's 1957 Playboy story of the same name (above). *Far right*: James Marsden and Cameron Diaz star in 2009's The Box, an adaptation of Richard Matheson's 1970 story Button, Button (near right).

You'll Shoot Your Eye Out

There are no triple-dog dares in Jean Shepherd's *Red Ryder Nails the Hammond Kid*. Ralphie's teacher is named Miss Bodkin and Ralphie sucks on soap not for swearing but for breaking a window. For fans of holidaymovie mainstay A Christmas Story, this feels all wrong. But Shepherd knew that the details in his sweet-silly sketches of a Midwestern



Above left: Dennis Weaver in Steven Spielberg's tense *Duel*, based on Matheson's playboy tale (left) **Above right:** The original fiction on which both versions of *The Fly* are based **Right:** Oscar-winning The Hurt Locker took inspiration from Mark Boal's 2005 article *The Man in the Bomb Suit*

middle-class childhood were transposable, that's why so many readers loved them. So it's only natural that 1983's *A Christmas Story*, co-written by Shepherd and partially adapted from his December 1965 playboy piece, switched up specifics. Both *Red Ryder* and the movie feature a struggle with a department store Santa. Absent from *A Christmas Story*, though, is Shepherd's lament for Depression-era deprivation, in which a store is "floor after floor of shiny, beautiful, unattainable treasures."

For fans of the film, reading the story today creates something of a feedback loop of nostalgia, Shepherd's imagination somehow inextricable from our own. His prose effortlessly cues up visions of the film's scenes. It also makes clear just how adeptly co-writer and director Bob Clark — once panned for the sex comedy *Porky's* — adapted far less lusty anecdotes of innocence lost.

Dread in the Driver's Seat

Suspense and *horror master* Richard Matheson often cackled at what passed for civilization and how easily the cracks within it widened into chasms. Of the nine short stories he penned for Playboy, two were made into films.

In June 1970's *Button, Button*, a couple is offered $50,000 simply for pushing a button. The catch: If they push it, a stranger will die. With single-sentence paragraphs that slyly foreshadow an abyss-gazing conclusion, Matheson upends the comforts we take for granted. Unfortunately, director Richard Kelly's 2009 adaptation, The Box, fussily overcomplicates the premise (adding NASA, aliens and wormholes) for an effect that feels more derivative than dastardly.

Meanwhile, it's safe to say that without Playboy there would be no Steven Spielberg as we know him. Reading Matheson's April 1971 short story, *Duel*, was "one of the few times I ever picked up playboy without looking at the pictures," Spielberg told fellow filmmaker Edgar Wright in an interview this year. For his directorial debut of the same name, Spielberg cut by half Matheson's own, already sparse adaptation of the story — about a nebbish everyman pursued by a homicidal truck driver — and made a 74-minute, high-speed spectacle on which he staked his claim to *Jaws* and a peerless legacy. Not lost in Spielberg's quest for economy: Matheson's warning that the line between entropy and the everyday is easily crossed.

Good Cop, Bad Cop

"Singing Burt Reynolds" and "biker Charlie Sheen" sound like odd descriptors for films about cops confronting their codes of conduct, but then these two adaptations stray furthest from their original playboy sources.

Larry L. King's *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* took an indirect route to the silver screen. After his short story appeared in the April 1974 playboy, King helped reimagine it as a musical that became a Broadway hit and led to Universal Pictures buying the film rights. The 1982 movie features saccharine show tunes and none of the original story's Watergate-era ire for the "professional meddlers and candy-assed politicians" who shuttered a brothel — and King loathed it. He felt Reynolds was ill-suited to the role of Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd and, just weeks before the premiere, took to PLAYBOY'S pages to chide "Uncle Burt" for turning the film into "Smokey and the Bandit Go to a Whorehouse." Even more superficial is 1994's *Beyond the Law, based on Undercover Angel,*

Lawrence Linderman's July 1981 profile of a policeman who infiltrated the Hells Angels motorcycle club. The real Dan Black lost his family, gained a speed addiction and served time for armed robbery, as recounted by Linderman. Charlie Sheen's surrogate, Dan Saxon, suffers nightmares, boasts hair extensions and fails to prevent a murder. Black served as a consultant to the film, odds are his rehabilitation wasn't as simple as removing his shirt and retreating into the desert, as Sheen does in the film's final scene.

Our Man in Iraq

Mark Boal is arguably the poet laureate of the Iraq war's emotional toll, with incisive journalistic examinations of how machismo can turn malignant.

In his May 2004 playboy article, *Death and Dishonor*, Boal reports on the aftermath of the brutal murder of Army Specialist Richard Davis. The reluctance of military officials to probe Davis's disappearance prompted his retired staff-sergeant father to investigate, ultimately, the father's lifelong dedication to the service was sledgehammered to its studs. Boal has a story credit (alongside writer-director Paul Haggis) on the 2007 adaptation, *In the Valley of Elah*, which focuses less on *Dishonor's* frustration with manipulated truth and more on the minutiae of military service giveand-take. Nevertheless, the film, and Tommy Lee Jones's Oscar-nominated turn in it, captures the blindsiding speed with which dishonesty can dismantle one's dignity.

Boal took solo reins to write 2009's *The Hurt Locker*, a fictional account inspired by his September 2005 article, *The Man in the Bomb Suit*, and a nearly month-long embed in Iraq with the U.S. Army's 788th Ordnance Company — bomb-defusing technicians who are five times more likely to die than other soldiers. Boal's article conveys the adrenalised addiction to that "morbid thrill." His Academy Award–winning script for the surprise best-picture Oscar winner mainlines it — along with nerve-shearing tension and the idea that delivering containment from chaos is a job well done.

Roll Credits

Besides their Playboy provenance, these films have something else in common: They all wade into the murk of American morals and values — examining how they're established, exploited and eradicated — and how they can evolve. As the villain of *The Box* dispassionately decrees, "There are always consequences." ■

Our Favourite Cameos

Holly
Deacon
MIKE COHEN

Tell us something surprising about you?
I am a mass ve book worm and get through about 3 books a week I love anything to do with true crime and juicy murder People always assume I am a bit of a bimbo but I actually have several A level qual fications

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Yes, I am so excited to have been given the opportunity. It has always been one of my dreams

What inspires you?
My friends because no matter where I have lived in my ife I have always had great friends around me They have helped me through tough times and ce ebrated with me .n good times. They have shown me the kind of love that exists through respect and mutual adoration.

What are some of your hobbies?
I like to socialise and party like there is no tomorrow. I also like a good b.nge on a Netf.ix series w.th a ton of munchies Online shopping is another hobby or shall I say addiction of mine

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?
Robbie Wil iams, it reminds me of my lovely little nanny that sadly passed away

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?
Pamplemousse – which means grapefruit in French

Turn-ons
Tattoos (the more the better), good dress sense, great sense of humour and doesn't take themse ves too seriously and f nally aa cracking smile

Turn-offs
Ill-fitting sunglasses is one of my pet peeves for some reason Along with that, freshly cut hair and people who don't love an mals are a no go!

Describe to us your perfect date
Perfect candle lit d.nner on a sandy beach with 100 puppies running around and loads of champagne

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
New York woul.d be my city of choice as I would love to see the city at n ght espec a ly in a helicopter Mr Grey sty e

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Smile whilst you stil have teeth

Ribbed and Roasted

With a sense of humour to match his hedonistic habits, Hugh Hefner gamely submitted to skewering

BY **SASCHA COHEN**

Almost everyone remembers the 2001 Comedy Central Roast of Hugh Hefner, which took place just two and a half weeks after 9/11, when the New York City skyline was still black and smouldering. Gilbert Gottfried made a risky, toosoon joke about air travel but then won back the audience with his filthy version of "The Aristocrats," giving grief-stricken America permission to laugh again. Hefner, in his 70s and with multiple young girlfriends, gamely tolerated a night full of gloves-off jabs about his ageing body and unorthodox sex life.

But it wasn't Hef's first time on a dais getting roasted by his celebrity friends.

Decades before the raunchy late-night special entertained Comedy Central audiences, The Dean Martin Celebrity Roast was airing on NBC, and in 1973 Hefner was in the hot seat.

The program was based on the early 20th century tradition of Friars Club roasts – private dinner shows for the entertainment elite, intended to affectionately insult a guest of honour with material that often ran blue. Martin's cleaned-up version, shot in Las Vegas, was a good-natured, black-tie affair with mostly scripted, PG-13 shtick and a martini-infused, Rat Pack vibe.

How did a magazine publisher end up as "man of the week" on a televised comedy roast? Hefner had befriended Martin along with Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. back in the 1960s. Together they were part of the hip Hollywood in-crowd, evoking an urbane style of masculinity that aligned closely with playboy's own brand of sophisticated bachelorhood.

In fact, Hefner knew his way around a soundstage, he had charmed television audiences before, with Playboy's Penthouse in 1959 and Playboy After Dark in 1969, programs that offered viewers a glimpse into star-studded soirees full of beautiful women. By 1973 Hefner was skilled at crafting his public persona as a debonair Casanova and bon vivant.

Participating in a comedy roast was an extension of this self-mythologising, and as a genre, the roast had much in common with Hef's vision of Playboy creativity, rebellion against political correctness and hedonism raised to epic levels.

The jokes from the Dean Martin roast were largely flattering, referring to Hefner's swinging lifestyle full of "booze and broads." A sense of admiration, rather than hostility, was the theme of the evening. Although Hef was pushing 50, sportscaster Howard Cosell commented on his "taut, agile body," and nightclub comic Jackie Gayle marvelled at his attainment of "fame, fortune and girls galore."

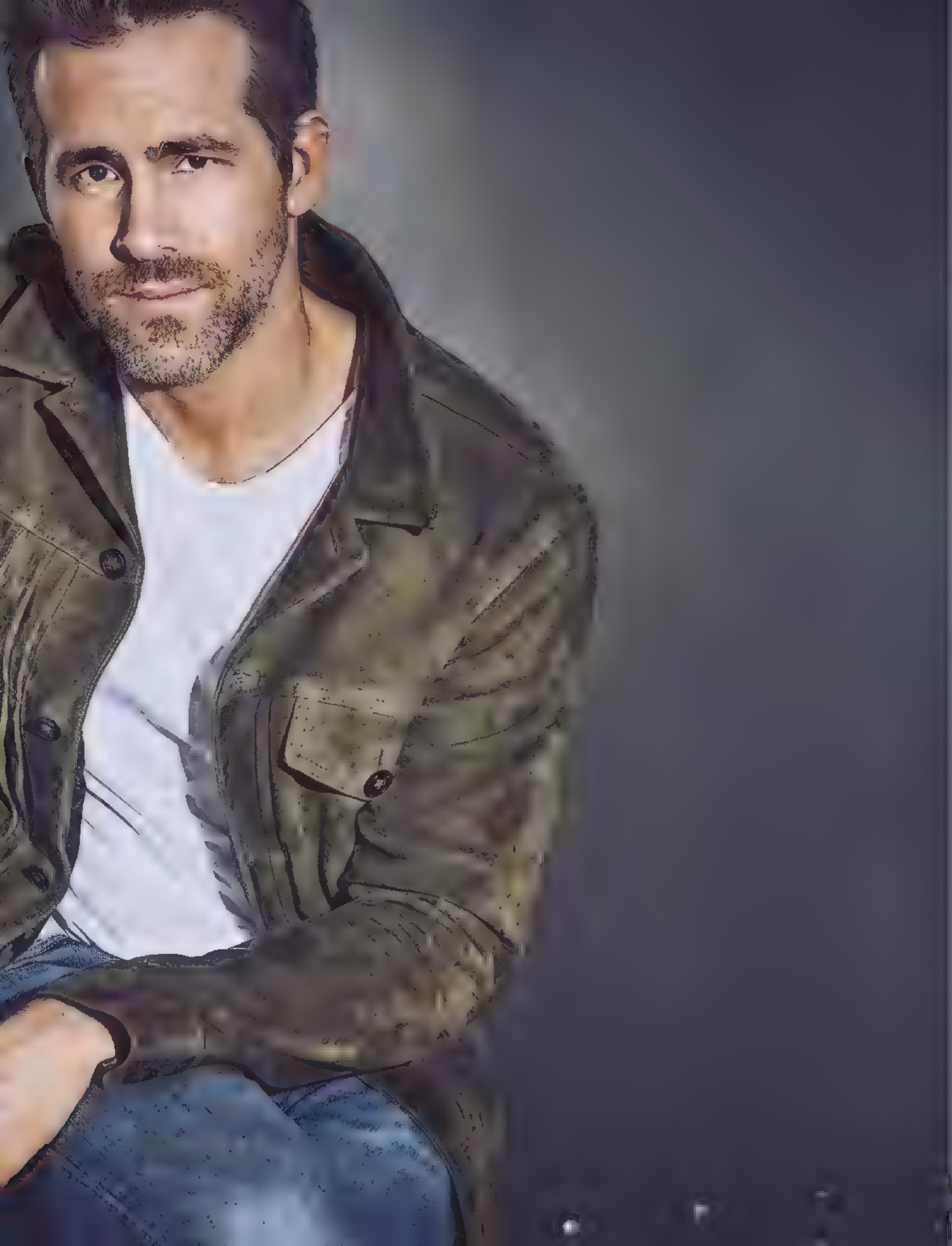
Indeed, the worst thing the participants could come up with about Hefner was that he was a sex-obsessed hedonist. Martin introduced him as an "American success story" who'd picked himself up out of the gutter but "unfortunately left his mind there." Actress Audrey Meadows joked that "Hugh shows women as they really exist, in the mind of every red-blooded American pervert." Entertainer Joey Bishop reminded the audience that "we're all here paying tribute to a smut peddler."

Hefner, sporting a shag haircut and sideswept bangs, puffed his trademark pipe and smiled. When it was his turn at the podium, he quipped, "I never really realised it was possible to have this much fun sitting up."

This guy really was laughing when he cracked Dear Martin about Hef during the 1972 roast. He was upstairs in his mansion on Playboy Mansion Drive in his bedroom. He gets some contract issues got thrown out, waterbeds with air recaps."

FLYING HIGH

97
POINTS
AVIATION
AMERICAN GIN
BATCH DISTILLED
FROM AN ADVENTUROUS BLEND OF
SPICES FROM AROUND THE WORLD
97
POINTS
AVIATION
AMERICAN GIN
BATCH DISTILLED



Renowned as the brand that catalysed the global craft spirit revolution and invigorated the gin category, Aviation American Gin is handcrafted in small 100-case batches at the House Spirits Distillery in Portland, Oregon, USA and part-owned by popular Deadpool actor Ryan Reynolds

Back in 2006, American bartender Ryan Magarian got together with pioneer distiller Christian Krogstad to produce a more democratic gin that is smooth enough to enjoy neat but which works as a perfectly-balanced base for cocktails And so a new era began.

Breaking away from the British tradition of the London Dry in which Juniper is the leading flavour profile, the New Western Dry Gins – of which Aviation was the first – bring botanicals to the fore. What's more, the break from tradition has created space for other distillers following in Aviation Gin's wake to play with new and different ingredients, thus setting the scene for the craft gin explosion

We spoke to the Brand Ambassador and mixologist AJ Snetler from Truman & Orange, the innovative premium drinks company, about the USA's number 1 selling gin.

What makes Aviation Gin so versatile and mixable?
The fact that it is indeed "the best damn gin on the planet" according to our Planetary Expert, Ryan Reynolds. But seriously, it was made by a partnership of bartenders, mixologists and distillers – a first in the industry – and people love its smoothness It is softer and subtler than most gins Also, it has killer packaging which recalls the glamour of the 1920s – think Great Gatsby!

What's the best way to drink Aviation Gin, in your opinion?
Definitely on ice with a squeeze of your favourite citrus, or in a classic G&T.

What's your favourite cocktail to make with Aviation Gin?
The Raspberry Fizz! It's classic, flavourful, and the colour has a strong, bold attitude of its own, just like Aviation

Aviation has a unique blend of spices – what makes it so unique?
Balance is always key: the combination of both bitter and sweet orange peel, the floral notes from the French Lavender, all rounded off by the spice and Juniper makes for a beautifully balanced gin

We know you love motorbikes. And mixing drinks. If Aviation Gin was a motorbike, which one would it be and why?
The American Original of course! I love my Harley Davidsons, and to me both Aviation and Harleys are reminiscent of true, bold American craftsmanship that is timeless, strong and powerful

How is Ryan Reynolds involved?
Ryan is the new owner, and well, the head of marketing for Aviation everywhere He loved the gin so much he bought a stake in the company!

AVIATION
AMERICAN GIN
BATCH DISTILLED
FROM AN ADVENTUROUS BLEND OF SPICES FROM AROUND THE WORLD
43% ALC BY VOL
PRODUCED & BOTTLED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The classic Aviation cocktail is made with gin, maraschino liqueur, crème de violette, and lemon juice.

SERVE IT UP JUST RIGHT!

Set the mood with three of our favourite Aviation-inspired drinks that are simple to prepare and easy to sip on!

Raspberry Gin Fizz Cocktail

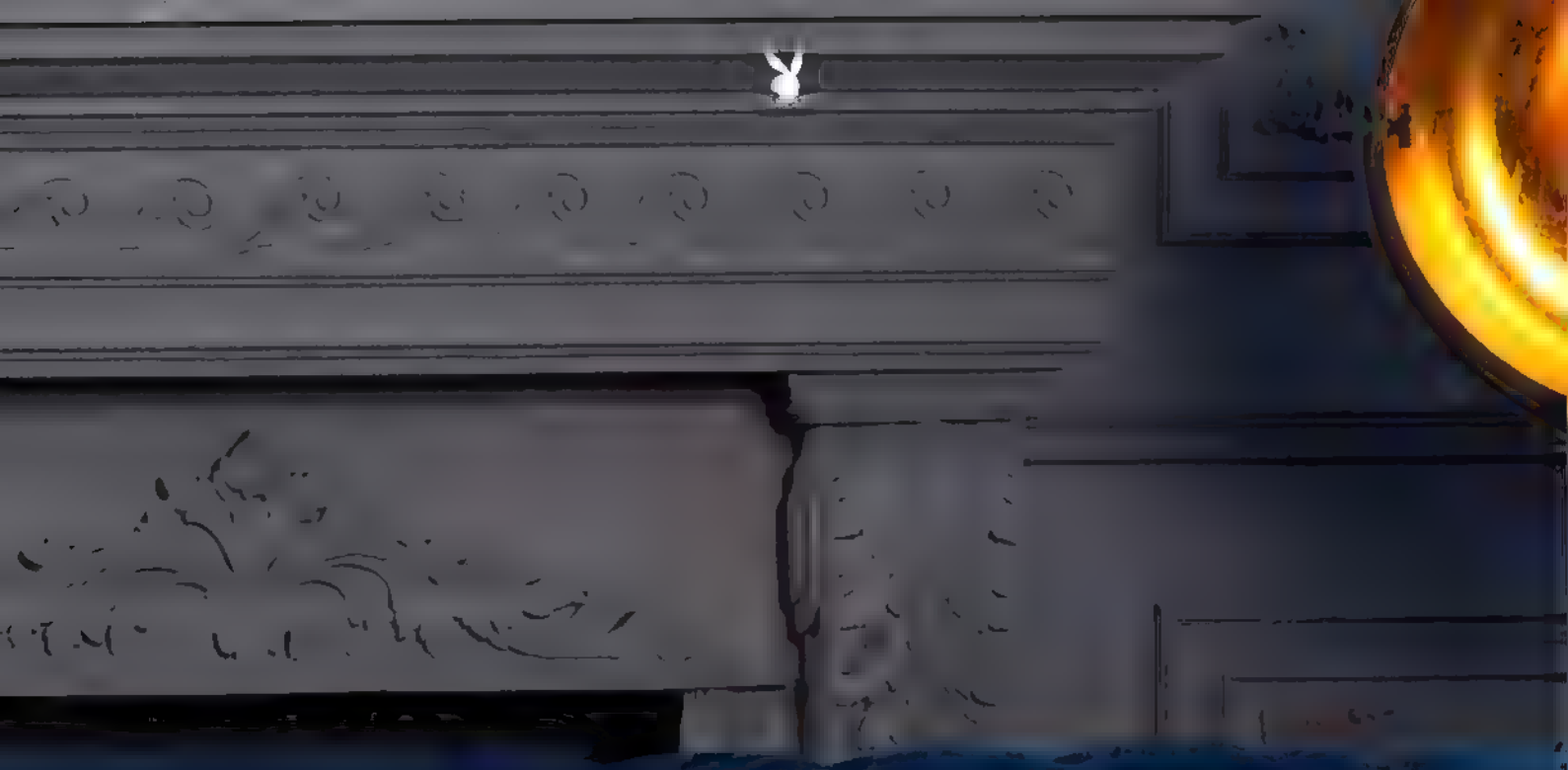
- *50ml Aviation Gin*
- *25ml raspberry shrub*
- *15ml beetroot juice*
- *20ml lemon juice*
- *20ml egg white*
- *Top with tonic*
- *Hard dry-shake, wet-shake and strain*

Bee's Knees

- 60ml Aviation American Gin
- 30ml freshly pressed lemon juice
- 30ml clover honey syrup
- Serve neat or over crushed ice

Aviation Classic G&T
50ml Aviation Gin
90ml tonic water
Mix in a tall glass, add ice, stir and garnish with a wedge of lime or lemon and a sprig of lavender

JULIET
AMELIA
BRUCE COLERO
RACHEL MARCHISELLO
MELLY MADUNA



Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Yes! It has always been a dream of mine.

Tell us something surprising about you?
I'm full of surprises. That's what makes life exciting. I enjoy the thrill of driving on the race track. My favourites are Spring Mountain in Las Vegas and Sebring in Florida.

Describe yourself in one sentence
What you see is what you get. Beauty on the outside and love and respect on the inside.

What are some of your hobbies?
Working out, exploring new cities, [illegible] personal growth and shopping.

What is your biggest turn on?
Confidence, sense of humour, spontaneity, honesty, snuggles, exotic cars, genuine people and soaking in the sun on the beach.

What turns you off the most?
Arrogance, disrespect, rudeness, laziness, jealousy, being too busy to spend time with me.

Describe to us your perfect date
A perfect date is taking the boat, lunch and wine to a deserted little island. Getting naked in the clear water and enjoying the beauty of life with my man.

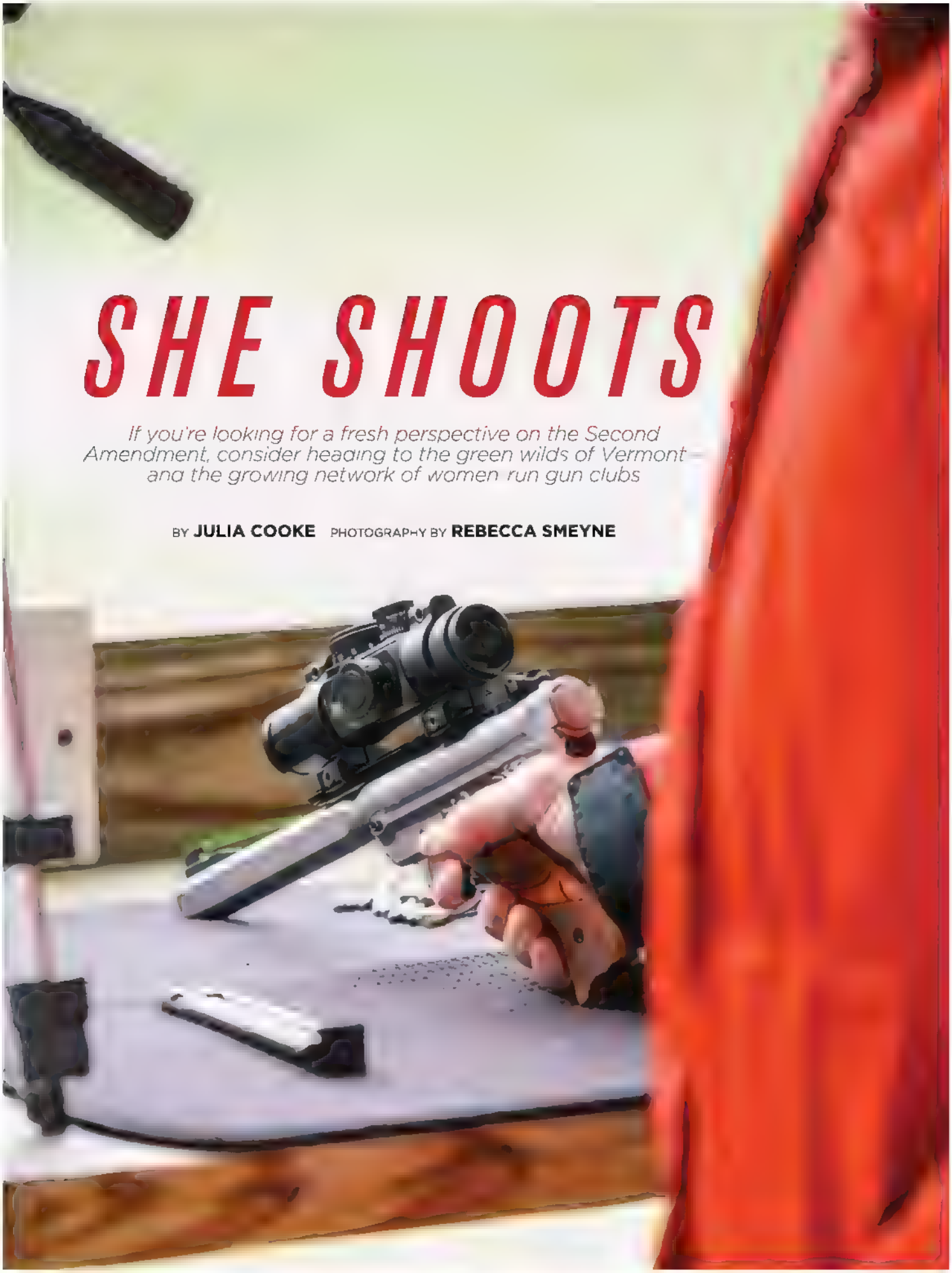
What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
Breaking out as an internationally published cover model.

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Follow me on Instagram **@julietamelia**. I post a new pic almost every day. Visit my website julietamelia.com where I post my most recent shoots and behind the scene videos. Thank you for your support!

SHE SHOOTS

If you're looking for a fresh perspective on the Second Amendment, consider heading to the green wilds of Vermont – and the growing network of women-run gun clubs

BY **JULIA COOKE** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **REBECCA SMEYNE**



Five years ago, Ellen Jareckie found a dying racoon in the back of her garage. He lay on her dog's bed, and he was enormous. The game warden wouldn't be able to make it to the house for a day or two.

The inability to ease an animal's suffering was unusual for Jareckie, who had a state wildlife-rehabilitation permit and who'd nursed pigeons, mice and once a great blue heron back to health. She couldn't bring herself to smack the racoon over the head with a two-by-four. She also couldn't touch him for fear of rabies. Maybe her brother had a point, she thought: "Get a gun," he'd long suggested. Jareckie, a self-employed painter who lives in the rambling arcadia of Vermont, initially had no interest. But she often encountered sick and dying animals that needed to be safely euthanised. She bought a handgun and a fireproof safe, and she signed up for a basic pistol course.

Three years after she'd come upon the racoon, she met Marsha Thompson. They'd both gotten involved with the local branch of the National Rifle Association's Women on Target training program. Women who'd taken the course began to volunteer to train others, and in 2016 Thompson took the reins of the Vermont division. Her course became the first of its kind nationwide: firearms training exclusively for women, taught exclusively by women.

Women are the fastest-growing demographic inside the NRA. Both inside the organization and around it, training courses, blogs, podcasts and product ranges are aimed at women, featuring taglines such as "Where the Feminine and Firearms Meet" and "Where Style and Self-Reliance Coexist."

"A lot of women haven't found a safe space — safe being a strange word to use — where they can learn to shoot and not deal with men's egos," Thompson, a 39-year Army veteran, told me when I called to ask her for some shooting instruction. I'd visited a backyard range once before and enjoyed it; this time, I wanted to learn what the experience would be like with no men involved. I also wanted to understand what Thompson and Jareckie and their team had activated up in Vermont — and how the conversation around guns might differ among their cohort.

In the post-Parkland debate over gun legislation, women's voices have grown louder across the political spectrum. Picture mothers lobbying for the freedom to send their kids to school with neither fear nor bulletproof backpacks while speakers at the Conservative Political Action Conference call gun rights a feminist issue and NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch tells a CNN town hall that packing a gun keeps a woman safe from rape. In Vermont, the stakes were suddenly high: As the state moved toward passing a raft of gun laws in April, hundreds of protestors lined up at the state capitol days before their passage to collect 1,200 30-round magazines for AR-15 and M4 weapons, donated in protest by a firearmsaccessory manufacturer.

• • •

The April morning I drive to Marsha Thompson's farm is a stark Vermont idiosyncrasy. A light whisking of snow, a scrim of ice at the river's edge, morning sun bright and warm by eight a.m. but the air still well below freezing. Thompson lives on 43 acres with an impressive array of animals: horses and chickens, a Rottweiler named Zelda and a bulldog named Winston.

When Thompson joined the Army in 1973, the women wore skirts and weren't permitted to shoot guns. Over the course of her career, she became an instructor, earned a science degree, entered the reserve and worked for the state as a land surveyor. By the time she'd retired from both Army and state jobs 39 years later, Thompson had spent a decade as the only female marksmanship instructor in Vermont.

After retirement, she started to go to the firing range with the Burlington Rifle & Pistol Club "for the camaraderie and the fun and all that kind of stuff," she tells me as we sit in the living room of her 200-year-old farmhouse. Pastoral murals on the walls, painted by her partner, pull the countryside indoors.

At the range, teaching civilians was both natural and unanticipated as she practiced for competitive matches. "I had women coming up to me because I seemed to know what I was doing, I guess, and asking where they could get training," she says. "They didn't want to get training from the men, particularly." Men got competitive. Men — the fear of assault or an aggressive ex — were the reason many women wanted to learn to shoot in the first place. That Thompson is calm and matter-of-fact, with a face that appears impassive even when it cracks into a smile and then just as quickly out of it, probably helped.

In a yellow field behind her house she sets out three guns: a Ruger compact .22, a .38 revolver and a 45. She explains how the size and shape of each firearm will feel different in my hand before setting it in my palm and tells me how each will feel to shoot: heavier and lighter, more and less kick. Load a magazine like so. Never, ever point a gun at a human I'm not prepared to shoot. Push with my right hand and pull with my left. Thumb down, hips squared, shoulders relaxed. After squeezing through the five shots in the magazine and emptying the chamber, slide a bright yellow piece of plastic through the chamber and barrel.

We don't speak much as we shoot. I like the quiet between blasts, the technical challenge, the way it makes me conscious of my muscles, my breathing and my surroundings. I miss the target on four of my five first shots, but by the end of our session, Thompson's easy interjections help me invert the ratio.

"Most girls are good at shooting," she says as we walk back from the target on our last round. "They have more attention to detail; there's less ego. They're always thinking about what's going on around them."

Attendees at Thompson's courses have ranged in age from 12 to 82. They've been motivated by wildlife rescue, safety concerns, curiosity and the desire to learn more about a specific kind of firearm. Some have said their

husbands wanted them to learn to handle a gun; others have told Thompson that their husbands thought they were out shopping. Only about a quarter have wound up buying a gun. Fine by her — Thompson is about knowledge, not purchasing power. Though she remains a staunch NRA supporter, she rankled at some of the organization's tactics when she worked with the Women on Target program. How they were "always pushing product" and online courses versus hands-on practice guided by knowledgeable instructors. The NRA didn't like small clinics, which Thompson didn't understand; the association didn't approve of the army pants she wore either.

Last year, Thompson and Jareckie and a number of the other women involved in the Vermont Women on Target clinics split from the NRA to found the nonprofit Vermont Women's Shooting Association. Thompson asked local fish and game clubs if they'd serve as hosts, and they eagerly agreed. Thompson built benches and target frames, Jareckie designed a logo, and they started advertising. Over the summer, 27 women attended eight beginner and intermediate clinics. Thompson's goal was education, but she wouldn't complain if she could get a few more women to be competitors.

Bureaucracy appropriate to a national organization seemed at odds with Vermont, a state whose culture defies easy stereotyping. Vermont is rural and among the least populous in the nation. It's the only state where high gun ownership statistics do not correlate directly with national voting trends. Independent senator Bernie Sanders, reelected with more than 70 percent of the vote in 2012, got flack during the 2016 presidential primary from Hillary Clinton about his relatively progun platform. Conservative commentators have called the state "safe, happy and armed to the teeth," which isn't entirely true, especially for women — Vermont also has startlingly high statistics for domestic violence. More than 60 percent of violent crime in the state takes place in the home.

Among the one in five American females who own guns, self-protection is the most commonly cited reason for keeping firearms. But whether owning a gun makes a person any safer is a matter of debate. According to the National Institutes of Health, armed individuals are 4.5 times more likely to be shot in an assault than those not in possession of a gun. Statistics may not bear out the assertion that a gun makes the human who holds or owns it safer from crime, but for the women with whom I spoke — all of whom have gone through extensive firearm training, practice target shooting regularly and said they wouldn't have bought a gun if they weren't deeply confident in their ability to use it safely and effectively — a firearm certainly makes them feel safer.

"There was a 180 in my emotional landscape when it came to 'Oh my gosh, I'm in my house and I have nothing but a flashlight to protect me' versus 'I'm in my house with a loaded gun,' " says poet and professor Jillian Weise. She tends not to talk about guns in her circles, though I'd read her lucid writing on guns in the literary review Tin House. But she often finds her perspective absent from the national dialogue: Weise is female and small, and she has one leg made of flesh and one prosthetic. Disabled people in the U.S. are three times more likely than the general population to be victims of violent crime.

She purchased a gun six years ago at the age of 30. She's usually the only woman at her local South Carolina range, logging her practice hours. "I've never had to use my firearm," she tells me, "but then I wonder about the question, because it almost feels like I use it every single day of my life by default of it being in my house, loaded, no safety, ready to go."

Feeling safe can shape how a woman understands the world and her place in it: Jareckie and the wildlife she loves; Thompson and her competence in a male field; Weise and how the world perceives her vulnerability. Most of these women are aware that feeling safe is not the same as being safe. But for now, I hear beneath their words, it's what they've got.

"MOST GIRLS ARE GOOD AT SHOOTING. THEY'RE ALWAYS

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The air has warmed to a balmy 40 degrees two days later, on April 11, the day Governor Phil Scott signs Vermont's new gun laws. Scott has arranged for a public signing on the Montpelier capitol steps. The move feels like a benediction granted to his most vocal critics and supporters, or at least those who have the luxury of showing up at two p.m. on a Wednesday.

The day after the Parkland shooting, Governor Scott, a Republican, pledged not to change the state's lack of restrictions on firearms. But then police picked up a Vermont 18-year-old whose journal laid out plans for a school shooting in tiny Fair Haven. He'd bought a shotgun and four boxes of ammunition. "I will gear up and let loose my anger and hatred. It'll be fantastic," he'd written.

"Everything should be on the table at this point," Scott said shortly after. Within two months, three new gun-control bills were drawn up and approved. They allow police to remove guns from people considered a risk and those with domestic-assault citations, ban bump stocks and high-capacity handgun magazines, raise the legal purchasing age to 21 and require universal background checks.

Party lines did not hold as state legislators voted on the bills. Some lawmakers took issue with the difficulty of enforcing the high capacity magazine ban, which places restrictions on magazines sold or possessed in the state after October 1, 2018. Others had problems with the age limit; in a state with steep income inequality, some families teach their tweens to hunt to help put food on the table. "It drove the leadership crazy,"

Few women have come to protest the bills. I speak with a voluble, warm, middle-aged woman named Lorraine who tells me she thinks armed guards will do more than legal restrictions to dispel school shooters. As we speak, her husband pushes between us. "If you're talking to her, you're talking to me too," he says. She shoots him a look and keeps talking.

A woman named Elizabeth tells me she's been the victim of domestic abuse. After she'd disentangled herself from the abusive ex, she bought a gun. She supports the ban on bump stocks but not the age restrictions. Nearby, a handsome 40-ish man named Eli says he's at the capitol for a variety of reasons. "I believe that self-defense is a basic human right. Also I have a daughter who's almost seven and I'm very, very concerned about the direction that

range from 108,000 to 3 million instances each year. "The lack of comprehensive data sets and...the fact that the data lead to contradictory conclusions call into question the reliability and validity of gun-violence data," write the authors.

In the absence of reliable statistics, it begins to seem like feelings are what men are talking about too.

• • •

To discuss guns with responsible, thoughtful people who own them is to invite flamboyant suggestions and sensitive observations. In the course of reporting this story, I've heard a male gun owner propose that all fellow owners should be legally liable for whatever their firearm does. I've heard a female gun owner suggest that men have proven themselves unworthy of the technology, so

THINKING ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND THEM."

Representative Susan Buckholz had told me earlier. Now, in Montpelier, we walk together toward the golddomed capitol and the signing.

A few hundred Vermonters have amassed on either side of the capitol steps, with journalists scurrying between camps of protestors and supporters of the new legislation. thank you, gov. scott, declares a sign on one side. this is what a hero looks like.

On the other side of the steps, hunters' orange pops against the gray of stone and sky. non law-abiding citizens do not follow the gun laws, reads one sign. my rights don't end where your feelings and misconceptions begin! reads another. Underneath, in small letters, mvga (Make Vermont Great Again). To these citizens, Scott is, in their words, a traitor, a liar, a pansy. Many wear stickers that read, don't new york my vermont gun rights.

these things are going," he says. "When she gets older and she's out on her own, especially when she's very young, just starting out, she may not be able to afford the best housing or things like that. I want to make sure that she's still able to protect herself."

"With a gun?" I ask.

"Yes, with a gun," he says. "Because a recent CDC study has shown that guns are the best way to defend yourself, that you have the least likely risk of getting injured yourself in your own self-defense. You can look that up."

The study in question is called "Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence." Released in 2013, it's actually about the lack of reliable research on the risks and rewards of gun ownership. Depending on where you look, the study points out, estimates of defensive firearm use

only women should be able to own guns, which should be issued — along with a year's worth of training and a driver's license — upon a young woman's 16th birthday. I've heard an avid hunter, the father of a toddler who will grow into a gun-proficient woman, refer to his ambivalence toward the "ersatz masculinity" of gun aficionados of both genders.

Although Representative Buckholz and her husband own guns, they didn't store them at home when her now-grown son lived with them. These days, Buckholz has been logging hours at the range; at the age of 61, she has a stalker. She tells me she isn't sure what she'll do if he shows up on her front step. Feeling safe not only means different things to different people but can shift with changing circumstances.

Preceding pages and above: Scenes from the 2018 Vermont State Rifle & Pistol Association's outdoor spring tournament in Jericho. Both Jareckie and Thompson competed.

As my interviews wrap up, a number of women point out to me that they identify as political independents. "I'm not a Trump supporter," one says. "I tend to vote down the middle," Jareckie tells me. In this they are indicative of a national trend, especially where gun laws are concerned. In a 2017 Pew Research Center study, six in 10 Republican and Republican-leaning female gun owners reported favoring a ban on assault-style weapons and creating a federal government database to track gun sales, as compared with about a third of their male counterparts. Nearly 90 percent of the same group of women favored barring gun purchases by the mentally ill and people on no-fly lists, as well as background checks for private sales.

Over and over, in every interview with a female gun owner, legislator or activist, a single word comes up: fear. The right to live unafraid; the fear of losing rights. Male fear, female fear; true fear, manipulated fear; fear of the hypothetical and the tangible.

"We're scared shitless in this country right now. I can't remember a time that I've ever felt everything to be so destabilised," says Buckholz. "We're allowed to be afraid as women. Encouraged, supported in it. But if you are a white male, you're not supposed to be afraid. You're supposed to be in charge. And you're terrified."

Given room to breathe, fear can flourish into dialogue, another state legislator points out to me. "Women come to this conversation having lived our lives physically, literally vulnerable, and knowing that that is a normal state of being," Sarah Copeland-Hanzas tells me as we sit inside Vermont's capitol building. "So we're willing to have conversations — how do you balance someone's need to protect themselves with society's need to defend against the errant or the crazy or the temporarily insane?"

And fear plus a firearm equals scenarios that can and do go tragically wrong based on an unpredictable matrix of reality, anxiety and bias. That same April week in Michigan, a white homeowner shot at a 14-year-old black boy who'd knocked on his door to ask directions to the high school after he'd missed his bus. Black Americans are the victims of more than half of all gun-related homicides, though they constitute only 14 percent of the national population.

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A few days after our first shooting lesson, I meet Thompson and Jareckie for target practice with the Burlington Rifle & Pistol Club at the National Guard's Camp Ethan Allen Training Site. As we set up, my target flanked by theirs, discussion whirls around us about Vermont's new gun rules and regulations. I overhear one man telling a trio that the 17 state senators who voted "against your Second Amendment rights" were transplants from out of state. "Flatlanders," they're called here.

We begin to shoot. At first, the sensations — the unfamiliar rat-a-tat of many bullets in tandem, the sudden scent of gunpowder — unmoor me. I am no longer one person on a bucolic backyard range. When I set my gun down, I forget to thread the emptychamber indicator through the gun. Jareckie reaches silently into my range of vision and does it for me. "Remember to push and pull," Thompson says coolly. Before long, I am immersed in the challenge, silent and focused. Having fun.

"You think you'd ever want to carry?" one of the men nearby asks me at the end of the session.

"I very much doubt it," I say.

"I'll give you three months before you change your mind," he says with a chuckle.

This is the fundamental difference, I suddenly understand, between shooting guns with men, or white men, at least, and women. Women have skin in the game — our vulnerable bodies — and yet few gendered expectations around our expertise with or enthusiasm for the technology in our hands. The result is a conversation that can center, at its best, on technologies and their capabilities, actions and their consequences. A group of Americans, as Copeland-Hanzas implied, uniquely qualified to lead the way on an issue riddled with fear and misinformation.

An examination later that day of the biographies and voting records of Vermont state senators revealed no correlation between state of birth and yea or nay votes on the new gun laws. Still, even on the left, some were wary of a triumphal tone about the gun laws' passage. "Everyone's feeling like we've done something great here," Buckholz, a Democrat, had told me before warning that some related challenges — Vermont's mental health facilities, the socioeconomic and cultural polarities of a proudly rural state — had gone exactly nowhere.

Her caution was appropriate. Before the end of April, gun-rights groups had filed a constitutional challenge to the magazine ban.

Thompson, meanwhile, was busy firming up her summer plans. She hoped to add a defensive clinic to the lineup, since so many women last year had requested one. The year's first beginner clinic, in May, had attracted 17 signups in three days. The event represented a step up: bigger numbers, sponsored by the Vermont State Rifle & Pistol Association, at the National Guard range. She'd opened the attendance to both genders — three men and three boys had signed up — and enlisted a few guys from the pistol club to help oversee the large group.

But the women were in charge. ■

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